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JOHN WESLEY
AND THE
METHODIST SOCIETIES

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BY

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'JOHN WESLEY AND THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETIES,'
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'THE REVIVAL OF RELIGION IN ENGLAND IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY,'
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PREFACE

In my book on *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* I have traced Wesley's course until that Christmas Eve, in 1739, when he met a small company of earnest people whose supreme desire was to know how they might 'be saved from their sins.' I have been so much encouraged by the reception accorded to my book that I have been made bold to attempt a still more formidable task. I hope to be able to describe the work of Wesley down to the time of his death. In this volume I watch him as he lays the foundations of the Methodist Church. They were so carefully and securely laid that, up to the present time, they have determined the character of the building erected on them.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness to those who have preceded me in the work I am attempting. I am an heir to their rich stores. My thanks are also due to those members of the Wesley Historical Society who have so willingly responded to all my requests for help. I am sure my readers will join me in tendering to the Rev. John Elsworth special thanks for compiling so admirable an Index.

J. S. S.

February, 1923

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I

SEPARATION FROM THE FETTER LANE SOCIETY

In a former volume[1] we have described the association of John Wesley with the Religious Societies, and have indicated the point at which that association was interrupted. We must now take up a larger task, and attempt to record the facts which led to the formation and establishment of the Methodist Societies, the precursors of the Methodist Church.

John Wesley left London on January 3, 1740, and returned to Bristol, visiting Oxford on his way. In Bristol he found that the severe winter had caused much privation among the poor. At all times the spectacle of their sufferings excited his compassion. He immediately organized in Bristol means of relief, and daily fed a hundred, and sometimes a hundred and fifty, famishing people. At the end of the month he was called away to London to visit a young man lying in prison under sentence of death. Staying in London for a month, he attended the meetings of the Fetter Lane and Foundery Societies. The condition of the former was critical, and he spent much time in trying to compose the disputes that threatened to rend it asunder. The old causes of disturbance persisted. In his *Journal*, under the date February 26, he says: 'Complaint was made again (as indeed had been done before, and that not once or twice only), that many of our brethren, not content with leaving off the ordinances of God themselves, were continually troubling those who did not, and disputing with them, whether they would or no. The same complaint was made the next night also, at the meeting of the Society. I then plainly set before them the things they had done, expostulated the case with them, and earnestly besought them not to trouble or perplex the minds of their brethren any more; but at least to excuse those who still waited for God in the ways of His own appointment.' This statement shows

[1] *John Wesley and the Religious Societies.*

that Molther's doctrine of 'stillness' had made rapid progress, and that the time was approaching when a resolute stand must be made against it if the Society was to preserve its Church of England connexion and character.

It is not essential to our purpose to enter into a minute description of the controversies that agitated the Fetter Lane Society at this period. The points in dispute were of vital importance, and those who wish to study them should acquaint themselves not only with the details contained in the *Journals* of John and Charles Wesley, but also with those recorded in Benham's *Memoirs of James Hutton.* The latter book was written many years after the occurrence of the events. It is natural that we should prefer evidence which is furnished by contemporaneous documents, but the wider outlook in matters of controversy is always the safer.

So far as we can judge, John Wesley did his best to settle the disputes on the question of 'stillness.' He was ready to admit whatever truth there might be in the arguments and assertions of those whose views differed from his own. The spirit of conciliation, which was daily strengthening in him, led him to make suggestions that seem to us impracticable. For instance, he proposed a rearrangement of the 'bands' by which those who had adopted the doctrine of 'stillness' might be separated from those who 'stood by the ordinances' —an expedient which could only have a fleeting success. If it had been tried the individual 'bands' might have been immune against the excitements of controversy, but that immunity would not have extended to the meetings of the whole Society. If, in a Society meeting, some one had asserted that a man had no faith at all if he sometimes felt doubt or fear, and that he ought to be 'still' (that is, he ought not to go to church or sacrament, or search the Scriptures, because he could not do any of these things without trusting in them), it is probable that strong protests would have been made against such opinions. Then we must remember that in the Society frequent expositions were given by preachers of varying views. If Molther expounded one evening and Charles Wesley the next it was inevitable that contrary opinions would be expressed. Neither of them possessed in a high degree the gift of prudent reticence. Charles Wesley would certainly not have veiled the light that was in him when, in a Church of

England Society, the doctrines of the Church were called in question and its ordinances were treated as not only negligible, but, in some cases, perilous. It is difficult to see how the law of compromise could have secured permanent peace in the distracted Society.

In April the disputes were at their height. John Wesley, who was in Bristol, was earnestly desired to come up to London. When he arrived he was told that all the confusion was owing to Charles Wesley, 'who would preach up the ordinances.' Once more he put his strength, skill, and patience into attempts to end the bitter contention. He explained in public those Scriptures which had been misunderstood; in private he conversed with the people who had been 'led out of the way.' Acting with great wisdom, he determined to ascertain for himself the doctrines held and taught by Molther. With Charles Wesley he waited on him, and they conversed for two hours. In John Wesley's *Journal* we have an account of the result of the interview. In the course of the conversation Molther explicitly affirmed: '(1) That there are *no degrees* in faith; that none has any faith who has ever any doubt or fear; and that none is justified till he has a clean heart, with the perpetual indwelling of Christ and of the Holy Ghost; and (2) That every one who has not this ought, till he has it, to be *still*—that is, as he explained it, not to use the ordinances or means of grace, so called. He also expressly asserted: (1) That to those who have a clean heart the ordinances are not matter of duty. They are not commanded to use them; they are free; they may use them, or they may not; (2) That those who have not a clean heart ought not to use them (particularly not to communicate); because God neither commands nor designs they should (commanding them to none, designing them only for believers); and because they are not means of grace—there being no such thing as means of grace but Christ only.'[1]

It is not difficult to discern some elements of truth in Molther's statement, but it is indisputable that his teaching was out of harmony with the doctrines of the Church to which the members of the Fetter Lane Society professed to belong. The comment of the editor of Wesley's *Journal* on the controversy we judge to be correct. He says, 'Molther's doctrine of "stillness" was at the root of the dispute. It was an example

[1] *Journal*, ii., 344.

of fanatical misinterpretation of a few Scripture texts, promulgated amongst simple-minded people by a fervent enthusiast, who came to them endorsed by Zinzendorf's great name and all the associations of Halle and Herrnhut. If the Wesleys refused to be moved from their doctrinal steadfastness it was largely because they had been brought up in the doctrine of the Articles, Homilies, and Formularies of the Church of England, and also because they had learned to apply principles of sound reasoning to their exposition of Holy Scripture.'[1] The temper and strong convictions of the members of the Fetter Lane Society defeated all John Wesley's efforts to effect a compromise, and, with many misgivings, he returned to Bristol.

Early in June John Wesley was once more in London. The Foundery had risen from its ruins and had become a place of residence as well as a centre of evangelistic work. To his great comfort John Wesley had been able to provide in it a home for his mother. We cannot fix the precise date when Mrs. Wesley became a resident there ; but in Mrs. Clarke's *Susanna Wesley* there is a letter written by Mrs. Wesley from the Foundery, which is dated December 27, 1739. In connexion with this letter Mrs. Clarke says : ' About this time Emilia Wesley, who had been for a few years married to the sometime apothecary of Epworth, the terribly impecunious Mr. Harper, became a widow, and, leaving Gainsborough, came with a true and faithful servant to remain with her mother at the Foundery.' We may take it for granted that a Wesley ' home ' had been established in London at the time when the Fetter Lane disputes raged most fiercely.[2] For a little more than two years and a half Mrs. Wesley resided at the Foundery. During the period she was closely connected with the Society, and her counsels deeply influenced the actions of her sons.

Much of John Wesley's time during his visit to London was given to the Fetter Lane Society. On one occasion he had the joy of meeting his old Georgia companion Benjamin Ingham, who, in the presence of the members, ' bore a noble testimony for the ordinances of God and the reality of weak faith.' Ingham's support was welcome, for Wesley's testimony, a few days previously, had been rejected by most of the members

[1] *Journal*, ii., 337 *note*.

[2] See Mrs. Clarke's *Susanna Wesley*, 201.

who heard it. The inevitable crisis was rapidly approaching. On Wednesday, July 2, he went to the Society and found that the hearts of the members were quite estranged from him. The next day he met 'a little handful' of them who still stood in the old paths, and says, 'But how long they may stand God knoweth, the rest being continually pressing upon them.' Two other interviews with the Society took place, 'but with no effect at all.'

The beginning of the end came in sight. Taking a copy of *The Mystic Divinity of Dionysius* with him, Wesley went to the Society and read to the members this extract from it: 'The Scriptures are good, prayer is good, communicating is good, relieving our neighbour is good; but to one who is not born of God none of these is good, but all very evil. For him to read the Scriptures, or to pray, or to communicate, or to do any outward work, is deadly poison. First, let him be born of God. Till then let him not do any of these things. For if he does, he destroys himself.' One of the chief opponents of Wesley immediately cried, 'It is right; it is all right. It is the truth. To this we must all come, or we never can come to Christ!' John Bray, who was present, suggested that the man who had answered did not rightly understand what had been read, but this excuse was instantly brushed aside. Another man in whose house a Society met supported the statement of Dionysius, and affirmed that he himself had used the ordinances for twenty years yet had not found Christ. He continued, 'But I left them off only for a few weeks and I found Him then. And I am now as close united to Him as my arm is to my body.' The conversation then revolved around the subject of the ordinances. To bring matters to an issue one asked 'whether they would suffer Mr. Wesley to preach at Fetter Lane.' After a short debate it was concluded that he should not preach there any more, 'the place having been taken for the Germans.' In explanation, it may be said that the Fetter Lane chapel had been taken on lease from Lady Day, 1740, by James Hutton, who had strong sympathies with the Molther party in the Society. The discussions lasted until eleven o'clock at night.

On Friday, July 18, Wesley was at the Foundery. In the afternoon he and a few friends joined with his mother 'in the great sacrifice of thanksgiving.' After the Communion a

meeting was held at which nineteen persons were present, including Lady Huntingdon, who was much attached to Mrs. Wesley, and was a member of the Fetter Lane Society. The question of the disputes at Fetter Lane was discussed, and the steps to be taken with regard to them were unanimously decided. Wesley, in his *Diary* note, says that it was ' agreed to leave the Society.' On Sunday evening, July 20, the resolution was carried into effect. John Wesley went to Fetter Lane with Lady Huntingdon, Benjamin Seward, and others. He read a paper to the Society expressive of his own views and condemnatory of those held by Molther and his party. He then withdrew, as did eighteen or nineteen of the other members. On the following Wednesday those who had seceded joined the Society at the Foundery. They numbered about twenty-five men, ' all of whom thought and spoke the same thing,' and seven or eight and forty of the fifty women who were ' in band.'

The severance of the Wesleys from the Fetter Lane Society excites feelings of regret and relief. In recalling the history of their connexion with it familiar faces shine out, and memories of great spiritual experiences are awakened. No Methodist who is acquainted with the story of his own Church can walk through Fetter Lane to-day without thinking of the debt of gratitude he owes to the men who formed the Society in those early days when it ministered to the enlightenment and guidance of the Wesleys in their search for conscious salvation. But, knowing the work that was lying before the brothers, our regret is tempered. The work of evangelizing the nation could not have been accomplished if the ties binding the Wesleys to Fetter Lane had not been severed. Opinions may differ on the question of the circumstances causing the severance, but its beneficial effect on the coming mission is indisputable.

In closing our record of the Fetter Lane disputes it is imperative that we should emphasize the fact that, during their occurrence, the Society was a Religious Society in connexion with the Church of England. It is necessary to do so in order to avoid the mistake of attributing the disputes to the Moravian Church. That Church must not be judged by the utterances of Molther. Its theology and practice must be ascertained by examining its acknowledged standards. The point which

requires our special attention concerns the ecclesiastical position of the Fetter Lane Society at the time when the separation took place. It is frequently asserted that when the Wesleys left it had become a Moravian Society. That assertion cannot bear the dry-light of facts. The separation took place in July, 1740. It was not until 1741 that the settlement of the Fetter Lane Society as a congregation of the Church of the Brethren was agreed upon, and the agreement was not carried into effect until November 10, 1742. Benham, in his *Memoirs of James Hutton*, speaking of the change, says: 'The brethren and sisters who had heretofore mainly constituted Hutton's Fetter Lane Society were now, under the advice of Count Zinzendorf, formed into a congregation of the Unity of the Brethren, they considering themselves, not as exclusively Moravians, but as a Society in the Church of England in union with the Brethren.' It is interesting to note the processes of the evolution. On September 7, 1742, Hutton, acting on instructions received from Spangenberg, took out a licence for the Fetter Lane chapel under the designation 'Moravian Brethren, formerly of the English Communion.' The available evidence proves that from the time of the separation of the Wesleys more than two years elapsed before the Fetter Lane Society was formally settled as a congregation of the Moravian Church.[1]

[1] See Benham's *Memoirs of James Hutton*, 79–89.

II

PROGRESS AT THE FOUNDERY

DURING the period occupied by the Fetter Lane disputes, other events occurred which now call for attention. The possession of the 'Rooms' at Bristol and Kingswood, and of the Foundery in London, relieved John Wesley from embarrassments that had hampered his work when carried on in buildings taken for the Religious Societies. The change had its disadvantages, but the records in the *Journal* from this time have an air of freedom which was most favourable to the accomplishment of Wesley's mission.

On Monday, January 14, 1740, John Wesley, in Bristol, resumed his Savannah practice of holding early morning services for the exposition of the Scriptures. For a few weeks the people assembled at six o'clock, but on March 25 the hour was changed to five o'clock. The resumption of these services shows that he was once more intent on reviving a practice of the early Christian Church. In the opening years of the third century such services were regularly held. Dr. Lindsay, in *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries*, says that the early-morning service was held not only on the Lord's Day, but on every day of the week. It was an act of common worship of the great Christian family. The *Canons* order the elders, deacons, readers, and people to come to church at cock-crow, and to consecrate the day by a service of prayer, praise, and reading the Word. If any members of the congregation were unable to be present they were enjoined to read the Scriptures at home, so that the first thing the sun was to see when it shone through their windows was 'the long roll of Scripture unfolded on their knees.'[1] These early services soon became a conspicuous feature in the worship of the Methodist Societies.

It is of special importance to note that at this time John Wesley observed a great change in the character of the work

[1] pp. 251–252.

of God in Bristol. Speaking of the previous spring, and evidently referring to the 'scenes' which then disturbed some of his services, he likens the progress of the work then to the advance of a rapid overwhelming flood. But in 1740 influences refreshing as the silent dews came over the people. Convictions sank deeper and deeper. Love and joy were more calm, even, and steady. In many God was laying the axe to the root of the tree, and they had no rest in their spirits till they were fully renewed in the divine image, in righteousness and true holiness. He rejoiced in this change. The scenes of disorder which had sometimes occurred in the year before had not exhausted his patience or confused the clearness of his spiritual insight. He had watched those who had been struck down by the force of unrestrainable emotion, and their subsequent conduct had showed him that their agony of conviction was unfeigned. But his words concerning the contrast in the Holy Spirit's methods of working reveal an accent of deep content.

We have suggested that Wesley's possession of the 'Room' in Bristol, while it increased his sense of freedom, had its disadvantages. It was inevitable that awkward questions should arise. Generally speaking, the civil authorities had refrained from interfering with the meetings of the Religious Societies. It was a moot point as to whether they came under the provisions of the Conventicle Act. Their character as Societies consisting exclusively of members of the Church of England was popularly supposed to protect them from attack. They usually met in private houses; but with the opening of the Methodist Mission a change was gradually taking place. Separate buildings were being erected for their meetings, and in them congregations of people were assembling to attend services which were not, strictly speaking, held in accordance with 'the liturgy of the Established Church.' The services were sometimes conducted by unlicensed clergymen, who had been ostracized by the ecclesiastical authorities and rigorously excluded from preaching in the churches of the neighbourhood. It seemed to the ordinary onlooker, who did not waste time on fine points of distinction, that if Dissenters were compelled to license their preachers and their meeting-houses in order to secure the protection of the Toleration Act, John Wesley ought to be obliged to take the same

course. He was not then prepared to do so. He would not admit that he was a Dissenter, and so he and his people had to wait for protection through years of bitter experience.

On Tuesday, March 18, John Wesley, when expounding the Scriptures in the New Room, Bristol, explained the words of St. Paul, 'Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city.' His exposition was interrupted by a person who, speaking aloud from the middle of the room, said 'Sir, I am come to give you notice that, at the next Quarter Sessions, you will be prosecuted for holding a seditious assembly.' On April 1, the day before the Quarter Sessions were held, he was at the Room when his exposition was again disturbed by the noise of a great crowd that filled the court and the alleys of the building, and overflowed into the Horsefair. Shouting, cursing, and 'ready to swallow the ground with fierceness and rage,' the rioters rushed about, intent on mischief. The Mayor, Mr. Stephen Clutterbuck, sent an order that the mob should disperse. It produced no effect. The chief constable, who was much prejudiced against the Methodists, then came in person, but the rioters defied and grossly insulted him. At length the Mayor sent several of his officers, who took the ringleaders into custody and did not leave the spot until the crowd dispersed. The next day, at Quarter Sessions, the rioters were brought up before the court. They tried to excuse themselves by alleging many things against Wesley; but the Mayor cut them short by saying 'What Mr. Wesley is is nothing to you. I will keep the peace; I will have no rioting in this city.' The firmness of the Mayor of Bristol contrasts favourably with the vacillation and weakness subsequently displayed by some of the magistrates in other parts of the country. He was a clear-sighted man, who saw the distinction between an assault of rioters and a prosecution conducted in harmony with the provisions of the Conventicle Act.

Charles Wesley had a somewhat similar experience in London. On May 22 the Whitsuntide mob, which swarmed in the Moorfields, flowed around the Foundery and then entered the building. It behaved outrageously. A few days later Charles Wesley heard that the Foundery had been presented at Hicks's Hall 'for a seditious assembly.' Sir John Ganson, who was

on the bench, interposed, and objected that no persons were named in the presentment. The document was amended by the insertion of the names of Charles Wesley, clerk, James Hutton, bookseller, Timothy [*sic*] Lewis, printer, and Howell Harris, *alias* the Welsh Apostle.[1]

Sir John Ganson, who was one of the ablest and most respected magistrates in London, quashed the whole proceedings. The grounds of his decision are not given. We know that he was a determined opponent of rioting, and was acquainted with the character of the work the Wesleys were doing in London. His power as a magistrate under the Conventicle Act was exceptionally great, and he had a legal right to affirm that the Act did not apply to the religious assemblies in the Foundery. The issues of the proceedings before the magistrates in Bristol and London were not altogether advantageous to the Methodists. They seemed to have confirmed the surmise of the Wesleys that the Conventicle Act did not apply to their meetings, and that strengthened their impression that there was no need to avail themselves of the protection of the Act of Toleration.

We must now fix our attention on the Society formed by John Wesley at the Foundery. It occupies a unique position. So early as 1749 it was recognized as 'the mother-church' of Methodism.[2] In some respects its organization resembled that of the Fetter Lane Society and the Societies in Bristol and Kingswood, but the distinctions are marked, and may still be recognized in the constitution of the Methodist Church. It is a mistake to suppose that the Society at the Foundery was at first composed entirely of persons who seceded with Wesley from Fetter Lane. From Charles Wesley's *Journal* we find that, on June 17, 1740, the Society at the Foundery numbered three hundred members. The contingent contributed by Fetter Lane was comparatively small; it was absorbed in the more flourishing organization. The congregations attending the preaching-services in the Foundery were large, sometimes filling the spacious room where they were held, while many stood without, unable to gain admission. The

[1] Charles Wesley, in recording these names, confused Lewis Timothy, the printer of John Wesley's Charlestown hymn-book, with John Lewis, Whitefield's printer in London. For Louis Timothée, librarian and printer, of Philadelphia and Charlestown, see *W.H.S. Proceedings*, xiii., 97–99.

[2] *Minutes of Conference*, vol. i., p. 44.

evangelistic work was carried on with great success, and large additions were made to the membership of the new society.

At the Foundery some of the arrangements existing at Fetter Lane were preserved. The 'bands' were continued. Wesley had found out their value in Georgia, Bristol, and Kingswood; and they, with their 'leaders,' formed an important section of the new Society. Love-feasts and watch-nights having proved their utility, were also retained, and became distinctive features of the organization. But in reading the *Journals* of John and Charles Wesley we are aware of the presence of a new spirit pervading the arrangements of the Foundery Society. Old things were passing away; a new era was commencing.

One of the most striking changes was in the position of John Wesley in relation to the members of the Society. In a Religious Society of the old type the 'director' was chosen by the members, and might be dismissed at their will. When the members at Fetter Lane decided that John Wesley should not be allowed to preach in their Room they acted within their rights; and his quiet withdrawal was an acknowledgement of that fact. The position in Bristol was rather different. Whitefield, in consultation with some of his friends in London, had perceived the peril of Wesley's first settlement of the New Room, and through his influence Wesley had acquired special rights in the building.[1] No such defence of his position existed in the case of Fetter Lane. The doctrine of 'unity of command' was unknown there. Watching the little company, the nucleus of the Foundery Society, assembled at the close of 1739, we note an exceptionally important fact. It consisted of persons who had been deeply impressed with the danger of their spiritual condition, and who came to Wesley to seek his advice. They entreated him to receive them under his care and he consented to take charge of them. Their acceptance of his guidance was a voluntary act. It was in their power at any time to withdraw from the new Society when they found his rule irksome. But so long as they remained in the Society the old condition persisted. They were under Wesley's spiritual care, meeting in a building that belonged to him. At the outset of the new departure Wesley took up this position. He had learned much from his association with the Religious

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, p. 289.

Societies ; he had passed through disappointing experiences ; he had wasted time and strength in fruitless attempts to compose disputes ; his chief work of evangelizing the crowds that flocked the hear him had been frequently interrupted by his journeys in the cause of peace ; he was conscious that his future usefulness was being jeopardized by the limitations imposed on him. He had borne annoyances with extraordinary patience and humility, but he welcomed the arrival of the hour of release. It gave him the opportunity of using in his Master's service the powers of leadership with which he was so remarkably endowed.

When John Wesley determined that there should be only one condition previously required in those who desired admission into the new Society, namely ' a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins,' he took a step which separated him from the Religious Societies. From the time of Dr. Horneck it was essential that those who joined the old Societies should be members of the Church of England. It is true that Dissenters were occasionally allowed to attend the meetings, but the conditions of such attendance were strict. Wesley, keeping his eye steadfastly on spiritual qualifications, declined to impose an ecclesiastical test on those who came to him earnestly longing for the salvation of their souls. He opened his new Society, not only to Churchmen, but to members of all other churches, and to those who were outside all religious organizations. He sought to help those who felt that they had only the form and not the power of godliness, and he joined them to his Society ' in order that they might pray together, receive the word of exhortation, and watch over one another in love.'

It is easy to detect the danger lurking in this most generous ' condition of admission ' into the Society ; but Wesley felt that if a man possessed a genuine desire ' to flee from the wrath to come,' if he asked for admission solely because he longed to be saved from his sins, the danger of accepting him was less than the danger of rejecting him. After testing the value of ' the condition of admission ' Wesley found that it was necessary to make ' Rules ' setting forth ' the conditions of continuance in membership.' They were contained in a well-known document, first published in February, 1743, to which we shall refer in its proper place.

The majority of the members of the new Society at the Foundery belonged either actually or nominally to the Church of England. The Wesleys, as preachers, had been excluded from nearly all the churches in London, and so the Foundery became the centre of their work. The preaching-services held there were conducted on similar lines to those in the New Room in Bristol, care being taken to show the members of the Society that they were not intended as substitutes for the regular services in the churches. St. James's, in the Horsefair, was the Wesleys' ' parish church ' when they were in Bristol, and St. Luke's, Old Street, when they were in London. The latter was a link with the past which must have made it exceptionally interesting to Mrs. Susanna Wesley. In 1732 a special Act of Parliament was obtained by which Dr. Annesley's old parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate, was divided. That portion of it known as the Lordship, which was outside the Freedom of the City and extended to Pentonville and Islington, was made a separate parish ; and in 1733 a church, dedicated to St. Luke, was built in Old Street. The rector was Dr. Nicholls, who was also the vicar of St. Giles. The members of the Foundery Society went to St. Luke's for the Communion, and on Sunday, August 3, 1740, John Wesley had the joy of recording in his *Journal* that ' in our parish church ' there was ' such a sight as, I believe, was never seen there before—several hundred communicants, from whose faces one might judge that they indeed sought Him that was crucified.' That beautiful scene might have been reproduced throughout the country if the Church of England had only known ' the time of her visitation.'

In watching the emergence of the new Society in London we recognize that its progress and stability largely depended on the personal influence of the Wesleys, and on their constant oversight of the work carried on at the Foundery. We cannot, however, forget that the Societies in Bristol and Kingswood demanded their presence and attention. The necessities of those Societies made it impossible for John Wesley to maintain the continuity of his work in London. It is true that Charles Wesley frequently exchanged with him ; but it was not always possible for the brothers to arrange for exchanges of service without a break. At the Foundery it seems that an experiment was made to provide a substitute who should have the oversight of the Society when the Wesleys were in the

country. A clergyman was selected, but the choice was not fortunate. His appointment occurred at the time when the disputes at Fetter Lane were raging, and when Charles Wesley returned to London he found that the clergyman had yielded to the influence of Molther. After conversing with him, he said to himself, ' My brother has set the wolf to keep the sheep.' The false step was retraced, but the problem that was giving John Wesley great concern remained for a time unsolved.

John Wesley saw it was essential that he should secure the services of some man on whom he could confidently rely to take charge of the new Society during the intervals when he and his brother were absent from London. He was not unfamiliar with the difficulty. It had faced him in Savannah and at Kingswood. At the latter place a solution had been found by the arrival of John Cennick, a layman, who, in addition to his work as a master at the colliers' school, was a preacher who soon acquired much influence over the members of the Religious Societies in that neighbourhood. It was natural that Wesley's thoughts should be assisted by the Kingswood precedent. If he could find a layman in London who was fit to meet the new Society for the purpose of giving them spiritual counsel, who would look after the ' bands,' and direct his attention to matters which concerned the effectiveness of the work carried on at the Foundery, he felt that his appointment would meet some of the difficulties which had arisen. His experiences at Fetter Lane had taught him that he must be assured that the person chosen was a man of high character and deep spirituality, and that he was in full sympathy with his own convictions concerning doctrine and practice. It was essential also that he should act in all things that concerned the Society, under his direction. It was not long before he fixed on one who was, in a double sense, ' a son in the gospel.'

In one of the ' scenes ' which occurred in a Society Room in Bristol a young man, Thomas Maxfield, was a conspicuous figure. He was struck down under John Wesley's preaching, and shortly afterwards entered into the deep experiences of the new life in Jesus Christ. He left Bristol, came to London, and joined the Society at the Foundery. A day came when it was necessary that John Wesley and Charles Wesley should leave London for a time, and John Wesley had to face the crisis. He appointed Maxfield to meet the Society at the

usual times, to pray with them, and give them such advice as might be needed. Maxfield took up the heavy task. For the profit of the members he began to expound the Scriptures to them. He had a special gift as an expositor. Lady Huntingdon, in a letter to John Wesley probably written at the beginning of the year 1740, says: 'I never mentioned to you that I have seen Maxfield; he is one of the greatest instances of God's peculiar favour that I know; he is raised from the stones to sit among the princes of His people. He is my astonishment! How is God's power shown in weakness! . . . *The first time I made him expound*, expecting little from him, I sat over against him, and thought what a power of God must be with him to make *me* give attention to him. But before he had gone over one-fifth part any one that had seen me would have thought I had been made of wood or stone, so quite immovable I both felt and looked. His power in prayer is quite extraordinary. To deal plainly, I could either talk or write an hour about him.'[1] The sequel is given by Henry Moore. Maxfield's expositions greatly profited the people. They crowded to hear him. 'By the increase of their number, as well as by their earnest and deep attention, they insensibly led him to go farther than he had at first designed. He began to *preach*, and the Lord so blessed the word that many were not only deeply awakened and brought to repentance, but were also made happy in a consciousness of pardon. The Scripture marks of true conversion—inward peace, and power to walk in all holiness—evinced the work to be of God.'[2]

The distinction between 'expounding' and 'preaching' is fine, and the dividing-line is soon crossed by an impassioned speaker. So far as we can judge from the imperfect materials at our command, Maxfield, instead of limiting his expositions to private meetings of the Society, began to preach to the general congregations at the Foundery. It is certain that, by some people, his proceedings were considered 'irregular'; they sent to John Wesley and asked him to stop them. He hastened to London to see for himself the actual position of affairs. His association with Howell Harris and John Cennick is enough to indicate that to lay-preaching in itself he had no

[1] *The Life and Times of Selina, Countess of Huntingdon*, i., 32–33.

[2] Moore's *Life of Wesley*, i., 505.

objection; but his sharp experience of Bowers and his party in Fetter Lane made him cautious.[1] Reaching London, he went to the Foundery; and, on entering the dwelling-house in which his mother lived, she met him. Seeing a look of dissatisfaction on his face, she asked him the cause. He replied, 'Thomas Maxfield has turned preacher, I find.' She looked attentively at him. We wonder if she recalled the days in the old Rectory at Epworth, when, under stress of circumstances, she had become a preacher, to the alarm of her husband. Did she remember how his protest hindered her successful work, and almost made her abandon it? To her son's question she replied in memorable words. 'John,' she said, 'you know what my sentiments have been. You cannot suspect me of favouring readily anything of this kind. But take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself.' Her advice was taken. Wesley heard him, and quietly said, 'It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good.' He had an interview with Maxfield, who expressed a desire to help him as 'a son in the gospel,' and to labour when and where he should direct. On these terms he was accepted, and was permitted to preach. Shortly afterwards Thomas Richards and Thomas Westell came to Wesley, and on the same conditions were received as 'regular' lay-preachers.[2]

The interval between the formation of the new Society and the secession of the Wesleys from Fetter Lane is a fruitful field for an investigator who is intent on discovering the fundamental principles of the Methodist constitution. We have indicated the generous terms of admission to membership, and have admired their breadth of charity. But Wesley soon learned a lesson he had cause to remember. It was the habit of some of the Fetter Lane members not only to frequent the services at the Foundery, but to be present at the private meetings of the Society. So long as they did not disturb the Society meetings they were welcomed, but it was found necessary to make an exception in the case of those who were bent on wrangling and disputing. John Wesley records such a case. There was a man who was determined to force his own

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, p. 299.

[2] See Wesley's *Works*, viii., 311, 8vo ed.; Atmore's *Methodist Memorial*, 266.

opinions on the members at the Foundery by dint of pertinacious controversy. Charles Wesley, always swift to act, gave directions that this man was not to be admitted to the meeting of the Society. His order was obeyed. The excluded disturber waited until John Wesley returned to London, and then laid a complaint against the official who had stopped him from entering the room. He evidently knew the difference in temper between the Wesleys, and hoped to obtain a reversal of Charles Wesley's decision. An interesting and revealing conversation ensued between him and John Wesley. The complainant asked, 'Do you refuse admitting a person into your Society only because he differs from you in opinion?' 'No; but what opinion do you mean?' 'That of election. I hold a certain number is elected from eternity, and these must and shall be saved, and the rest of mankind must and shall be damned. And many of your Society hold the same.' 'I never asked whether they hold it or no. Only let them not trouble others by disputing about it.' 'Nay, but I will dispute about it.' 'What, wherever you come?' 'Yes, wherever I come.' 'Why, then, would you come among us who you know are of another mind?' 'Because you are all wrong, and I am resolved to set you all right.' 'Then I fear your coming with this view would neither profit you nor us.' The man concluded the interview by crying, 'Then I will go and tell all the world that you and your brother are false prophets. And I tell you, in one fortnight you will all be in confusion.' Wesley's comment is important. He says, 'I mentioned this to our Society, and without entering into the controversy besought all of them who were weak in the faith not to "receive one another to doubtful disputations," but simply to follow after holiness, and the things that make for peace.' It was through much tribulation that the Methodist Societies learned the wisdom and safety of this counsel, but it is well to remember that it was given when the foundations of the Church were being laid. As the months went by methods of guarding the doors of the rooms in which the private meetings of the Societies were held were adopted, and the intrusion of incurable disputants was checked.[1]

The entries in John Wesley's *Journal* and *Diaries* at this critical time prove that in the creation of the new Society his

[1] *Journal*, ii., 353.

aim was simply the salvation of souls. All his arrangements had that end in view. Several of them had borne the test of experience; others were adopted at the call of necessity; but old methods and new were valued only as they led men to Christ and kept them from wandering away from Him. Wesley was an evangelist; but, in addition, he was a teacher. He roused men to a sense of their danger, but he was not content to leave them trembling in the presence of 'the wrath to come.' He watched them until they were awake to the consequences of sin, and then he told them in lucid, loving words of the sacrifice of the Cross. That was not all. The doctrine of 'Christ for us' was accompanied by that of 'Christ in us,' and the teachings which God has joined together he never put asunder. From the commencement of the new Society, and onward throughout his life, the conversion of sinners and the growth of believers in holiness were the objects he pursued with zeal unquenchable.

From the *Diary* we learn that early in June John Wesley spent a considerable time, on two days, in writing out a list of the names of the members of the Foundery Society. The number was rapidly increasing, and he was awake to the danger of admitting persons of whom he knew little. By writing their names in 'the roll' he grew to some extent familiar with them; but he went farther. He arranged those who were willing in 'bands,' putting them in charge of selected leaders after the fashion adopted in Savannah and Fetter Lane. He met the leaders, visited the bands, held love-feasts, and so came to know the 'band' members individually. But the constant influx of strangers into the Society increased his difficulties and often caused him grave concern. In the Society meetings he had an opportunity of extending his knowledge of the members. At the early-morning services, which he established at the Foundery, that knowledge became more intimate. We pause for a moment to emphasize the importance of those services. In the *Journal* we find some of the carefully written notes of the expositions which he then delivered. In the quiet hours of the morning he gave solid instruction on the questions which were agitating the Fetter Lane Society; he combated error and clearly stated and enforced Scriptural truth.[1] In these and other ways he arrived at an

[1] *Journal*, ii., 354–362.

ever-increasing knowledge of the members of the Society. But he was not satisfied. He felt that it was his duty to know them all individually, and he made valiant attempts to visit them 'from house to house'; but time and space fought against him and he had to wait until urgent necessity brought the solution of a problem that baffled him.

The new Society at the Foundery was well organized for its chief purpose—the promotion of the spiritual life of its members—but, as we watch its progress, a question arises which often gave Wesley grave concern. What were the arrangements for meeting the considerable financial obligations incurred by the purchase of the lease of the Foundery, and the necessary repairs and enlargement of the ruined buildings? That question is partially answered when we remember certain facts connected with the purchase, especially the offer made by Mr. Watkins and Mr. Ball when they interviewed Wesley and urged him to become the possessor of the place.[1] In after years he recalled the memory of that critical interview and gave additional interesting details. He tells us that a few days after the formation of the new Society some of the members came to him and said, 'Sir, we will not sit under you for nothing; we will subscribe quarterly.' He replied, 'I will have nothing; for I want nothing. My Fellowship supplies me with all I want.' One of them said, 'Nay, but you want a hundred and fifteen pounds to pay for the lease of the Foundery, and likewise a large sum of money to put it into repair.' In the presence of these undeniable facts Wesley withdrew his objection and allowed a subscription to be made for the building fund. At a meeting of the Society matters were explained. He then asked, 'Who will take the trouble of receiving this money and paying it where it is needful?' One person said, 'I will do it, and keep the account for you.' In the opinion of Wesley the speaker was fit for his office, and so, there and then, he appointed him as his first steward. Afterwards he desired one or two more to help him as stewards, and, in process of time, a greater number. When he chose and appointed them he indicated to each the distinct work in which he was to help him so long as he desired such help. It was in this way that the first stewards made their appearance in the Methodist Society, and their advent did much to free

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, p. 327.

Wesley from those financial embarrassments that hindered the progress of his evangelistic work. It is well to remember that stewards were appointed in the old Religious Societies. It is possible that the name of these officers was imported from those organizations which so directly and deeply affected the constitution of the early Methodist Societies.[1]

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, pp. 11, 12.

III

KINGSWOOD

In June and July, 1740, John Wesley was in London, busy with the organization and care of the new Society. On June 18 Charles Wesley left him there and returned to Bristol by way of Oxford. His stay in Oxford was brief, but he had time to visit the Religious Society, and, to his disappointment, he found that the teaching concerning 'stillness' had reached the city and was producing deplorable effects. At a subsequent and longer visit his fears were confirmed, and, in his *Journal*, he records the scattering of the Society.

Charles Wesley's visit to Bristol was prolonged. It extended, with short intervals of absence, from June 21 to December 24. It is necessary to watch the events that occurred during this visit, for they have left a deep impression on the constitutional arrangements of the Methodist Church.

There is no need to emphasize the fact that Charles Wesley was a strong Churchman throughout the whole of his life, but during the period which we must now survey we shall find that he was driven into courses of action which did much to lead the Methodist Societies into the independent position which they were afterwards compelled to occupy. It is strange to meet him at 'the parting of the ways'; but there he stands and waits to be our guide. It will be remembered that, with rare exceptions, the clergy of Bristol set their faces steadily against the work of the Wesleys. One of the weapons with which they attacked it was their refusal to administer the sacraments to the Methodists who were not their parishioners. Their action was all the more effective because they thought it could be justified on technical grounds. They had suddenly become students of canons and rubrics. The clergy of the time were not remarkable for their observance of ecclesiastical law, but their interest in its study was quickened during their conflicts with the Methodists. The 'non-parishioner' argument bore hard on the Kingswood colliers.

There was no church in the area of the wood in which the men worked and lived. One part of the wood was reserved as a chase. It lay in the parishes of St. Philip and St. Jacob, Stapleton, Mangotsfield, and Bitton.[1] If a Kingswood collier had been asked to name his parish church it is probable that he would have been puzzled. Neglected for many years, the colliers had grown up in the gloom of their forest with but scanty provision for their spiritual needs. When the light came to them through the preaching of Whitefield and the Wesleys they strongly desired to receive the sacrament. The Wesleys, by teaching and example, showed them, not only the privilege, but the duty of frequent Communion. That duty they were eager to discharge, but they found that ' the tables were fenced ' against them. Their disappointment moved the heart of Charles Wesley, and caused him to take a step which a broad-minded Christian man will hesitate to condemn.

On Sunday, June 29, 1740, Charles Wesley administered the sacrament at Kingswood to about eighty colliers, and on July 13 he gave it to more than seventy, ' different from those who received the last time.' We do not know the place of these celebrations. He looked on them as exceptional, and strongly preferred the administration of the Communion in a church. An entry in his *Journal* suggests that some of the colliers wished to receive the sacrament from his hands rather than from those of their persecutors. Much meaning may be read between the lines of this entry in his *Journal* on July 20 : ' Our poor colliers being repelled from the Lord's Table by most of the Bristol ministers, I exhorted them, notwithstanding, to continue daily with one accord in the temple, where the wickedest administrator can neither spoil the prayers nor poison the sacrament.' His exhortation was accepted, and on July 27 he accompanied a number of colliers to the service in Temple Church, Bristol.[2]

A modern Methodist, who is well acquainted with ancient landmarks, looks with special interest on Temple Church, with its leaning tower. When he enters it he will have no difficulty in re-creating the scene enacted on that July day. Let us enter the building. We note Charles Wesley in his clerical

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 254.

[2] Charles Wesley's *Journal* should be constantly consulted by all students of the earliest stages of Methodist history. It throws light on several incidents not fully explained in John Wesley's *Journal*.

habit. We see a group of pitmen listening to a clergyman who is 'recommending religion as the most likely way to raise a fortune.' The congregation is attentive to such an alluring subject, but now and again rustles, as if conscious of the approach of an exciting incident. When the sermon has been delivered proclamation is made that as the sacrament is to be administered, all shall depart who are not of the parish. The colliers take up their caps and leave. Then follows an event so important that Charles Wesley shall describe it. He says:

> While the shepherd was driving away the lambs I stayed, suspecting nothing till the clerk came to me and said, 'Mr. Becher bids you go away, for he will not give you the sacrament.' I went to the vestry door and mildly desired Mr. Becher to admit me. He asked, 'Are you of this parish?' I answered, 'Sir, you see I am a clergyman.' Dropping his first pretence, he charged me with rebellion in expounding the Scriptures without authority, and said in express words, 'I repel you from the sacrament.' I replied, 'I cite you to answer this before Jesus Christ at the day of judgement.' This enraged him above measure. He called out, 'Here, take away this man!' The constables were ordered to attend, I suppose, lest the furious colliers should take the sacrament by force; but I saved them the trouble of taking away this man, and quietly retired.[1]

This was not the only scene enacted in Temple Church. On Sunday, April 12, 1741, Charles Wesley and the members of the Kingswood 'bands' were present in the church, hoping to be admitted to the Lord's Supper, and they were again repelled. They returned to the colliers' school, and there Charles Wesley administered the sacrament to them. His prejudices had given way, and in his *Journal* he declares that if a house had been wanting he would have justified such an administration 'in the midst of the wood.' The opposition of the Bristol clergy had relaxed the rigour of his High Churchmanship, and had led him into the performance of acts that solved a serious difficulty. It is probable he did not perceive the importance of the steps he had taken. He would look on the Kingswood administrations as exceptional occurrences, and we know that he and his brother continued to urge the members of the Societies to receive the sacrament in the churches.

The Methodist of the present day who escapes for a little

[1] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, i., 246.

time from the roar of the road outside Temple Church and enters the building will now see therein a sight that will make him forget Mr. Becher and his constables. Let him pass into the Weavers' Chapel. It is a quiet spot. Resting there, 'a storied window' of four lights will excite his admiration. The scenes depicted are 'The Presentation in the Temple' and 'The Disputation with the Doctors.' Under the two lights containing the first subject the text appears, 'This Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel.' Under 'The Disputation' are the words, 'Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?' In the head-lights are figures representing David and Solomon; and above them is the Lord of the Temple—Salvator Mundi. The designs in this beautiful window were suggested by the Rev. William Hazeldine, the vicar of Temple, and the window was placed in the church by him in 1872, when the building was restored. Beneath the window is the inscription, 'In Memoriam. John Wesley.'

The sacramental was not the only problem that had to be faced by Charles Wesley during his visit to Bristol in 1740. The repulses of the members of the Societies from the Lord's Table knit them together more closely; but it was not long before their unity was threatened and impaired by discussions on another question. The controversy on Predestination affected the Society in Bristol, but its storm-centre was at Kingswood. It raged there so fiercely that towards the end of 1740 it nearly wrecked the Society in that place.

John and Charles Wesley were convinced and enthusiastic advocates of the doctrine of Universal Redemption. We know that John Wesley had found some difficulty in accepting the seventeenth article of the Church of England which is entitled, 'Of Predestination and Election.' No one can study that article without sympathizing with him in his hesitation. He seems to have consoled himself by adopting a theory akin to Bishop Burnet's, who, after declaring that the article 'has given occasion to one of the longest, the subtilest, and indeed the most intricate of all the questions in divinity,' expresses the opinion that, in the seventeenth article, 'the Church has not been peremptory, but that a latitude has been left to different opinions'—which, we presume, means that a man may exercise a free choice among the theories which he states

fairly and clearly in his 'Exposition' of the article.[1] The Wesleys held what may be called the Arminian view of the doctrine of Predestination and Election. They taught that Christ died for all men, and with Arminius declared 'that sufficient assistances are given to every man, but that all men may choose whether they will use them and persevere in them or not.' In their evangelistic work their belief in Universal Redemption armed them with overwhelming power. They went out into crowds composed of men and women who seemed to be cast out from the mercy of God, and they held wide open the door of hope to every penitent sinner. Their preaching of Universal Redemption is one of the secrets of their extraordinary success as national evangelists. If through hesitancy or love of compromise they had failed to sound this trumpet-note of the jubilee of mankind, the Methodist Reformation would never have been accomplished.

We think it will be admitted that the great majority of the Churchmen of that day held Calvin's view of the doctrine of Predestination and Election, and, therefore, were opposed to the teaching of the Wesleys. Some of the most earnest among them, such as the members of the Religious Societies, deprecated any attempts to question the prevailing conviction. This position was taken up by some of the members of the Fetter Lane Society, and by others in the new Societies in process of formation. In Bristol and Kingswood there was a variety of views, and it is no wonder that the fervent preaching of the doctrine of Universal Redemption led to heated controversy and to final separation.

On the day when Charles Wesley was for the first time repelled from the sacrament in Temple Church, he preached at Kingswood. John Cennick, who was a master in the colliers' school and a lay preacher, was present. Before the sermon Charles Wesley took occasion to declare that Cennick entirely agreed with him in his belief of the doctrine of Universal Redemption. Cennick confirmed this statement, and read one of his own hymns as a proof of his belief. A few days afterwards Charles Wesley was desired by 'one pestered with the Predestinarians' to expound Rom. ix. He did so, but his exposition was interrupted by a man, who furiously contradicted him, and 'even called for damnation on his own

[1] Burnet's *Exposition of the XXXIX. Articles of the Church of England*, Art. XVII.

soul if Christ died for all, and if God was willing that all men should be saved.' This interruption evoked the testimony of many, who declared their belief that Jesus Christ was the Saviour of all men. These scenes of excitement had a bad effect on Charles Wesley, whose health was frail. He was laid aside at a critical moment by an exceptionally severe attack of fever, which brought him down to the verge of the grave. His sickness in its acute form began on August 6, and he was not able to resume his work for more than a month. Early in September John Wesley came from London to see him, and had an opportunity of noting the disturbed condition of the Society at Kingswood.

Towards the close of September Charles Wesley was sufficiently recovered to resume his work. We see him going to Kingswood with Mr. William Seward, a friend of the Wesleys and of Howell Harris, a man of wealth who seems to have assisted John Wesley with money when the Room in the Horsefair was erected. Returning from Kingswood, Mr. Seward told Charles Wesley that Whitefield's sister and others had urged him to claim the Room, but he had refused, as he 'abhorred their baseness.' On the next day, in an interview with Mr. Seward, Charles Wesley learned that the Baptists had laboured hard to make him oppose the Wesleys publicly. 'Before we parted,' says Charles Wesley, 'all was set right again. Yet, a few hours after, he came from them and utterly renounced both me and my brother in bitter words of hatred, which they had put into his mouth.' Charles Wesley felt the estrangement keenly, and that feeling was intensified when, on October 8, he heard the news that Mr. Seward had been ruthlessly killed by the mob at Hay, in Wales.[1] Before he knew of his death Cennick showed him a letter from Howell Harris wherein he justified Mr. Seward's conduct towards the Wesleys, and said that he himself intended to declare against them. Charles Wesley's comment on Harris's letter reveals the reason of this projected renunciation—'With the loss of him and all things, I am commanded to preach the gospel to every creature.' He speedily found that the number of his losses would be increased. After reading the letter he preached to the colliers, and, while testifying that Christ died for all, Cennick 'gave him the lie' within the hearing of all

[1] See John Wesley's *Journal*, ii., 305–396, *note*.

After the service Charles Wesley interviewed his interrupter, and calmly told him, ' If I speak not the truth as it is in Jesus, may I decrease and you increase.' Cennick's interruption indicated that he had abandoned his former position, and it was not long before that fact became widely known.

At this critical time Charles Wesley went to Wales. He preached in several towns, and met Howell Harris. He tells us that all misunderstandings vanished at the sight of each other, their hearts being knit together as at the beginning. The renewal of the old friendship did not please every one. Some desired Charles Wesley to reprove Harris, and to denounce lay preaching and Predestination. At a meeting he was urged to rebuke his friend, but replied, ' I am unwilling to speak of my brother Howell Harris, because, when I begin, I know not how to leave off, and should say so much good of him as some of you could not bear.' His judicious reply silenced the objectors. His mission in Wales undoubtedly did much to allay the uneasiness that was being slowly developed in the Religious Societies in the neighbourhoods he visited. During his absence from Bristol John Wesley supplied his place. He had an opportunity of making special inquiry into the state of affairs at Kingswood. In his *Diary* there are entries which show that he spent some time with Cennick in private interviews, and perceived that the disputes were producing serious injury. He returned to London on November 22, and devoted considerable time to studying and writing on the subject of Predestination.[1]

Charles Wesley, on his return from Wales to Bristol, found that the controversy concerning Predestination had been intensified in the Kingswood Society. He came to the conclusion that for many months Cennick had been seeking to undermine the teaching and authority of the Wesleys. His success was evident. At a conference with Cennick and his friends, held at Kingswood on December 2, he found that he could come to no agreement with them, though he offered to drop the controversy entirely if Cennick would do the same. But matters had got beyond his power of management, and so he wrote a letter to John Wesley giving him a full account of the proceedings of the Predestinarian party, their practices

[1] A pamphlet entitled *Serious Considerations concerning the Doctrines of Election and Reprobation* was compiled by John Wesley at this time. It was printed in 1740, and consisted of extracts from Dr. Watts. See Green's *Wesley Bibliography*, No. 16.

and designs, and stating in particular that they wished to have 'a church within themselves, and to give themselves the sacrament in bread and water.' On the receipt of this letter John Wesley set out for Bristol. He met his brother, who, as he says, confirmed 'what he did not desire to hear.' He went to Kingswood and spent some days in efforts to compose the disputes. He had several private interviews with Cennick, and, at a long conference, held on December 20, at which Charles Wesley and others were present, Cennick told him plainly that he could not agree with him because he did not preach the truth, in particular with regard to election. Up to this point all his efforts at reconciliation had failed, but he was determined to persevere. He remained in Bristol, Charles Wesley going to London. On the last day of the year his hopes revived. He held a watch-night in the school at Kingswood. Many members of the faithful Bristol Society had gone out with him, and the school was filled from end to end. The year was concluded with prayer and 'in praising God for the wonderful work He had wrought upon earth.'

The opening of the year 1741 found John Wesley still in Bristol, earnestly striving after some arrangement that would effect the settlement of the disputes at Kingswood. His presence in the city was indispensable. His influence steadied the Bristol Society. The work there was prospering. At Kingswood a considerable section of the Society stood firm, never wavering in their acceptance of the doctrines he preached. He was a persistent optimist, and cherished the hope that, with prayer and pains, better days would come.

It was precisely at this period that a blow fell on him which tested all his powers of patient endurance. Towards the middle of January, 1741, he received a message from London which showed that his presence was imperatively demanded at the Foundery. He learned, to his great disappointment, that Charles Wesley had suddenly quitted his post, and that the Society at the Foundery was in a state of confusion. The news was so serious that he made up his mind that Bristol must be left for a time, and that he must go to London. We follow him along the road and try to read his thoughts. He excites our sympathy and admiration. We know that, usually, he was not afraid of evil tidings; his heart was fixed, trusting in

the Lord. But the possibility of his brother's desertion tested his faith and strained his fortitude to breaking-point. He was making rapid progress in the art of self-control. He was learning to be indifferent to the wounds he received on the ordinary battle-fields of life. They quickly healed, and were soon forgotten. But then, and ever after, he was peculiarly sensitive to the recurring ache of wounds received in 'the house of his friends.'

We have no reliable report of this painful episode in the life of Charles Wesley from his own hand. He probably recorded it in his *Journal*, but the section containing the entries from January to March, 1741, has not been recovered. A little light comes to us from the fact that on April 12 he read to the bands in Bristol an account 'of what had lately passed in London,' and in his *Journal* he says, 'It occasioned a grief which, mixed with pity, violated not their joy.' In the absence of his own explanations we must rely on those of other authorities. When he left Bristol and returned to London he entered heartily into the work at the Foundery. At the early morning services he began an exposition of the First Epistle of St. John. Then, one morning, he suddenly desisted, and told the disconcerted people that he should proceed no farther. The secret of this abrupt termination of his work was that he had become convinced that he must give up preaching and be 'still.' He seems to have yielded to the Fetter Lane influence, and to have accepted teachings he had vehemently and successfully opposed. The members at the Foundery were amazed. It was 'as when a standard-bearer fainteth.' The change in his views roused the anxiety of his friends in London. The Countess of Huntingdon remonstrated freely with him, and did much to rescue him from the fascination of 'stillness.' His brother's arrival was opportune. He took firm hold of the work at the Foundery. His presence was an inspiration. He met the people in the early-morning service, and began his exposition at the point at which Charles Wesley had ceased. The Society regained its confidence and rejoiced in the brightening prospect. Not only so. By conversation and correspondence with his brother he assisted him to turn his face again towards the light. On February 12 he had the joy of recording in his *Journal* that Charles Wesley had returned from Oxford, and had preached at the Foundery on 'the true way of waiting

on God.' He says that the sermon dispelled at once the fears of some and the vain hopes of others, who had confidently affirmed that Charles Wesley was 'still' already, and would come to London no more.

John Wesley left London on his return to Bristol on February 17. During his visit to London he had an experience of the riotous conduct of the mob that often assailed the Foundery. He tells us that on one occasion, before he began to preach, many men of the baser sort, having mixed themselves with the women, behaved so indecently as to occasion much disturbance. A constable commanded them to keep the peace; they knocked him down. Some who were near seized two of the rioters, and, by shutting the door, prevented further contest. The two captured men were afterwards taken before a magistrate, but, on promise of better behaviour, were discharged. On the day before John Wesley left London Sir John Ganson, the chairman of the Middlesex justices, called on him, and they conversed together about these disturbances. At a subsequent interview, on the last day of 1741, Sir John, who did not altogether approve of Wesley's forbearance, informed him that he had no need to suffer these riotous mobs to molest him; adding, 'Sir, I and the other Middlesex magistrates have *orders from above* to do you justice whenever you apply to us.' Henry Moore throws a pleasant light on these 'orders from above.' John Wesley told him that one of the members of the original Society of Methodists at Oxford had become a Quaker, and had settled at Kew. Being a man of considerable property and of exemplary behaviour, he was much respected, and had permission to walk in the royal gardens. There he frequently met George II, who was accustomed to talk freely with him. On one occasion, knowing that he had been at Oxford, George II asked him if he knew the Wesleys. 'They make a great noise in the nation,' he said. The Quaker replied, 'I know them well, King George; and thou mayest be assured that thou hast not two better men in thy dominions, nor men that love thee better than John and Charles Wesley.' He then gave the King an account of their principles and conduct, with which he seemed much pleased.[1] When the question of the riots came before the Council the King declared that no man in his dominions should be persecuted on account of religion

[1] Moore's *Life of John Wesley*, ii., 2–3.

while he sat on the throne. This declaration was made known, and by the vigorous action of the Middlesex magistrates the persecution of the Methodists by mobs in process of time ceased in London. Lord Macaulay, in his essay on 'The Earl of Chatham,' asserts that not one magnanimous or humane action is recorded of George II. His statement is sweeping, but it is deficient in accuracy.

With fewer burdens on his mind John Wesley returned to Bristol. He soon found that the situation at Kingswood had not improved. A separate Society had been formed, and all signs pointed to a permanent division. At a love-feast in Bristol he explained the reasons of the division at Kingswood. Cennick and some of his supporters were present, and a sharp discussion followed his statement. He stopped it by making an arrangement to meet Cennick at Kingswood on the following Saturday, when each could speak more freely; then the assembly dispersed.

The bands connected with the Room in the Horsefair staunchly supported Wesley at this dangerous crisis, and, during the days preceding the conference at Kingswood, he consulted them on a supremely important question. On Tuesday, February 24, he assembled them, and read over the list of the names of 'The United Society,' being determined that no 'disorderly walker' should remain in it. The eye is arrested by the new name of the Society. The first time he uses it is on October 30, 1739, in a *Diary* reference to a meeting held in the newly erected Room in the Horsefair. There is little reason to doubt that the entry refers to the Religious Societies which had been accustomed to assemble in the Nicholas Street and Baldwin Street rooms, and had been 'united' when the 'New Room' became their meeting-place. As the work prospered they lost their individuality as 'Religious Societies,' and the new name used by Wesley in the *Diary* persisted. That fact is established by the photograph of a fragment of a list of Bristol members which appears in the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*. The list, in John Wesley's handwriting, is entitled, 'The United Society, in Bristol, January 1, 1741.'[1] Further evidence of the use of the new name is furnished by an entry in John Wesley's *Journal* under date April 7, 1741, in which the Society at the

[1] See *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iv., 89.

Foundery is called 'The United Society'; and we know that, as Methodist Societies were formed in different parts of the country, they bore the same name. The question of the origin of the new name is important, but still more so is Wesley's statement concerning the purpose for which he submitted the list of members for the consideration of the Bristol bands on February 24, 1741. At this stage the distinction between 'the bands' and 'the Society' must be borne in mind. In a letter to Mr. Church written in 1746, and afterwards published in his *Works*, Wesley expressly says that the bands are not called the United Society, and that the United Society was originally so called, not after the Moravians, but because it consisted of several smaller Societies united together.[1] At the outset he made the members of the bands his counsellors, and was accustomed to bring critical cases before them for their consideration and advice. At the meeting in Bristol he submitted the list to them that he might be guided in his administration of discipline, as he was much concerned with the fact that 'disorderly walkers' were in the Society. Increase of numbers never fascinated him; he kept his eye fixed on the religious experience of his people, and on their character and conduct, and was determined to maintain in the Societies the standard set up in the New Testament by which Christians must be judged. In the *Journal* we see his mode of proceeding in Bristol. He read over the names of the members of the United Society to the bands, taking account of every person against whom any reasonable objection was made. He also noted the names of those who were not known to, and recommended by, some one on whose veracity he could depend. To those who were sufficiently recommended on the following days he gave 'tickets,' probably written with his own hand. Those members against whom objections were made he had 'face to face with their accusers.' Such as either appeared to be innocent, or confessed their faults and promised better behaviour, remained in the Society. The others were put 'on trial' again, unless they voluntarily excluded themselves. Wesley says, 'About forty were by this means separated from us: I trust only for a season.' This mode of administering discipline in the earliest years of the Methodist Revival shows its searching character. It was adopted, not only in Bristol,

[1] *Works*, viii., 441, 8vo ed.

but in London. We have a record that in April, 1741, Wesley, after due consultation, introduced a similar method of inquiry at the Foundery.[1]

On Saturday, February 28, the conference at Kingswood was held. The bands were assembled, and all who desired to speak were heard on the question of the conduct of those who had caused the disturbances in the Society. After full inquiry John Wesley read the following paper:

> By many witnesses, it appears that several members of the band-society in Kingswood have made it their common practice to scoff at the preaching of Mr. John and Charles Wesley; that they have censured and spoken evil of them behind their backs at the very time they professed love and esteem to their faces; that they have studiously endeavoured to prejudice other members of that Society against them; and, in order thereto, have belied and slandered them in divers instances.
>
> Therefore, not for their opinions, nor for any of them (whether they be right or wrong), but for the causes above mentioned, viz. for their scoffing at the Word and ministers of God, for their tale-bearing, back-biting, and evil speaking, for their dissembling, lying, and slandering:
>
> I, John Wesley, by the consent and approbation of the band-society in Kingswood, do declare the persons above mentioned to be no longer members thereof. Neither will they be so accounted until they shall openly confess their fault, and thereby do what in them lies to remove the scandal they have given.[2]

This decision of the band-society, pronounced by Wesley, produced a deep impression; but John Cennick and two of his supporters soon recovered, and declared that they had heard both John and Charles Wesley preach Popery. They said that they would not own they had done anything amiss. Being fearful of doing anything rashly, or contrary to the great law of love, Wesley, after much private consultation, called a meeting of the Society at Kingswood on March 6, and told them plainly what he thought had been wrong in many of them. He emphasized their despising the ministers of God and slighting His ordinances; their not speaking or praying when met together until they were sensibly moved thereto; and their dividing themselves from their brethren and forming a separate Society. He closed his statement by saying that, as the confusion increased daily, the matter could not be any longer delayed, and that, upon the whole, it was believed the only way to put a stop to the growing evils was

[1] *Journal*, ii., 442. [2] *Journal*, ii., 430–431.

for every one to take his choice and quit one Society or another. At this point some one interjected the remark, 'Our holding Election is the true cause of your separating from us.' Wesley's reply is memorable: 'You know in your own conscience it is not. There are several Predestinarians in our Societies both at London and Bristol; nor did I ever yet put any one out of either because he held that opinion.' After some further conversation and a short time spent in prayer Cennick left the room accompanied by about half of those who had attended the meeting. The next day Wesley preached at Kingswood and met 'the remains' of the Society. He found that fifty-two of the former members had withdrawn and upwards of ninety remained. He earnestly prayed that these might hold 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' The seceders erected a wooden tabernacle for the accommodation of Cennick and his supporters, which subsequently gave place to a stone building.[1]

During the progress of the conflict we have described John Cennick has occupied a prominent place. We have been conscious, however, that in the controversy he occupied a subordinate position, and that the separation at Kingswood was much more than a local disturbance. We shall not understand this painful incident unless we view it in connexion with events which had a decisive effect on the fortunes of the Societies in England and Wales.

On Sunday, April 29, 1739, John Wesley preached a sermon to a congregation of four thousand people in the Bowling Green, Bristol. It was printed by S. and F. Farley, of Bristol, and a hymn on 'Universal Redemption,' by Charles Wesley, was appended to it. The sermon is still well known under its title—'Free Grace.' Southey describes it as one of the most able and eloquent of John Wesley's discourses, and 'a triumphant specimen of impassioned argument.'[2] Wesley sent out some copies of this sermon to America, one of them to his friend, Dr. Alexander Garden, the Commissary of the Bishop of London, who resided in Charlestown, South Carolina. George Whitefield saw the sermon when he was in Charlestown, and was exceedingly disturbed by it. During his second visit to America he had been brought into intimate association with

[1] For Cennick's account of the disturbances see *W.H.S. Proceedings*, vi., 101, 133.
[2] *Life of John Wesley*, 486, Bohn's ed.

ministers, almost all of whom were Calvinists of a pronounced type, and asserted absolute predestination. They suggested to Whitefield the books he should read, and he adopted the views he found in them. The change in his views may be judged by the declaration contained in a letter he wrote to Wesley from Georgia on December 24, 1740. He says, 'I frankly acknowledge I believe the doctrine of reprobation in this view, that God intends to give His saving grace, through Jesus Christ, only to a certain number, and that the rest of mankind after the fall of Adam, being justly left of God to continue in sin, will at last suffer that eternal death which is its proper wages.' [1] A man holding such convictions must have found the sermon on 'Free Grace' intolerable.

Whitefield's discontent was sharpened when he received John and Charles Wesley's *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, published by Strahan in London in 1740. Those who turn over its pages at the present time will find it a little volume of exceptional value. It contains hymns which have secured a permanent place in the psalmody of the Christian Church. The book has won special distinction because it contains Charles Wesley's glorious hymn, 'Jesu, Lover of my soul,' published for the first time. But Whitefield was not in an appreciative mood of mind when he glanced through the book. It vexed and discouraged him. It is true it contained four poems addressed to him which were full of admiration of himself and his work.[1] Any satisfaction he might have derived from a perusal of these personal poems disappeared when he saw that the hymn on 'Universal Redemption' had been included in the collection, and that another on the same topic accompanied it. These hymns he considered most objectionable, and he wrote a letter to Charles Wesley criticizing them vehemently. He found another cause of offence in the 'Preface.' In it John Wesley expressed his view of Christian perfection, committing himself to statements which he subsequently modified. Whitefield's criticisms on this subject were keen, and some of them were just; but he made a mistake. In the course of his exposition Wesley quoted St. John's statement, 'Whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself,

[1] Tyerman's *Life of Whitefield*, i., 470.

[1] 'Lord of the wide-extended main' still holds a place, in a shortened and revised form, in the *The Methodist Hymn-book*.

and that wicked one toucheth him not' (1 John v. 18), and other similar assertions of the apostle. Losing sight of St. John, Whitefield attacked Wesley and accused him of teaching 'sinless perfection.' Wesley repudiated this description of the doctrine he taught, but the misleading phrase became popular, and was often used against him in the heat of controversy.

Whitefield expressed his opposition to the teaching of the Wesleys in letters he wrote to them. Before he left America, in February, 1741, he also composed an 'Answer' to the sermon on 'Free Grace.' It was printed at Charlestown, a copy being sent to Boston, and a third retained by him to be printed in London. He was determined to defend the doctrine of Predestination at all hazards, even if such defence occasioned 'a strangeness' between him and the Wesleys. He seems to have supposed himself capable of conducting the controversy in a manner which would prevent such an estrangement. When he landed in England, on March 11, 1741, he was disappointed to find that his former extraordinary popularity had waned, and that some of his old friends would no longer associate with him. A few, however, were faithful, and had commenced to erect a building called 'The Tabernacle,' which stood near the Foundery, a proximity of which Whitefield disapproved. Describing his difficulties in a letter written on March 25, he says, 'What is most cutting of all, I am now constrained, on account of our differing in principles, publicly to separate from my dear, dear old friends, Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, whom I still love as my own soul.' [1] Tyerman is of opinion that if the Wesleys and Whitefield had been left to themselves 'they would lovingly have agreed to differ,' but they were not so left. A fierce controversy ensued which divided them from each other for a season. Whitefield preached against the Wesleys by name in Moorfields and other public places; and once, in the Foundery, with Charles Wesley sitting by him, he preached 'the absolute decrees in the most peremptory and offensive manner.' Tyerman, a cordial admirer of Whitefield, admits that he showed bad taste by preaching such a sermon at the Foundery; but he affirms that the error was not repeated in any other of Wesley's preaching-houses.

The issue of the controversy was inevitable. On March 28,

[1] Tyerman's *Life of Whitefield*, i., 466.

accompanied by his brother-in-law, Mr. Hall, John Wesley waited on Whitefield and had a conversation with him. Reporting the result, he says, ' I much approved of his plainness of speech. He told me he and I preached two different gospels, and, therefore, he not only would not join with me, or give me the right hand of fellowship, but was resolved publicly to preach against me and my brother wheresoever he preached at all. Mr. Hall put him in mind of the promise he had made but a few days before, that, whatever his private opinion was, he would never publicly preach against us. He said that promise was only an effect of human weakness, and he was now of another mind.'[1]

Tyerman considers that John Cennick ' had more influence with Whitefield than was profitable.' We know that Cennick wrote to him when he was in America urging him to return without delay to assist him in his controversy with the Wesleys at Kingswood. As soon as Whitefield arrived in England he informed him of what had taken place at Kingswood, and Whitefield summoned him to London in order that they might consult together and ' see what God intended to do for them and by them.' The result of the consultation was apparent in a letter Whitefield wrote to Wesley, in which he brought several charges against him on the ground of his mismanagement of the affairs of the Societies in Bristol and Kingswood. Only one of these charges is worthy of record. Whitefield accused Wesley of perverting his design for the building of the colliers' school, and Wesley's reply is important. He says :

> Two years since your design was to build them a school, that their children also might be taught to fear the Lord. To this end you collected some money more than once ; how much I cannot say till I have my papers. But this I know, it was not near one half of what has been expended on the work. This design you then recommended to me, and I pursued it with all my might through such a train of difficulties as, I will be bold to say, you have not yet met with in your life. For many months I collected money wherever I was, and began building, though I had not then a quarter of the money requisite to finish. However, taking all the debt upon myself, the creditors were willing to stay ; and then it was that I took possession of it in my own name ; that is, when the foundation was laid ; and I immediately made my will, fixing my brother and you to succeed me therein.[2]

[1] *Journal*, ii., 439–440. [2] Moore's *Life of Wesley*, i., 499.

Whitefield's charges were mere echoes of Cennick's allegations, and Wesley disposed of them, but the divisions in London and Kingswood were serious and permanent. From the time of their occurrence there arose the distinction between the Arminian and the Calvinistic Methodists. That distinction received special emphasis in Wales, where in 1742, the first meeting of the Association of Welsh Calvinistic Methodists was held at Watford, in the county of Glamorgan, at which Whitefield presided, Howell Harris being among those who were present.

IV

CONSOLIDATION AND EXTENSION

The doctrinal discussions and the division in the Society at Kingswood did not divert John Wesley from the path he was pursuing. He regretted his severance from Cennick and the suspension of his friendly relations with Whitefield, but he went right on his way, hoping for the coming of a time when he and his old comrades would agree to differ in opinions but would be one in heart. We who watch him from a point that gives us a spacious view of the landscape of his life are able to perceive compensations that accompanied the circumstances we have described. The strong measures he adopted at Kingswood had a good effect. They secured peace for the members who continued to meet at the school; they defined with greater precision his relation to the people who had placed themselves under his care; and they suggested methods of disciplinary proceedings that, in spirit, have survived in the Societies to the present time.

The student of the Methodist Constitution experiences a sense of relief when he notes the advances of John Wesley to an independent position. It was some time before he disentangled himself from alliances which hampered him. It cost him a pang to say farewell to the Moravians and to the Religious Societies. Leaving them, he cast many a lingering look behind. On May Day, 1741, he tells us of the little love-feast which Peter Böhler held for those ten who joined together on that day three years to confess their faults one to another. Seven members of the original Society that first met in James Hutton's house were present. It was a meeting in which sacred memories were revived and deep emotions were stirred. 'Surely,' says Wesley, 'the time will return when there shall be again "Union of mind, as in us all one soul."' But we now clearly see that the interests of his national and world mission demanded that he should follow the diverging path.

In 1741 the advantages of Wesley's new position were

demonstrated. In June the Society at the Foundery numbered nine hundred persons, and the advance in Bristol was also steady. It was essential that some one possessed of a far-seeing mind, a strong hand, and a persuasive influence should be responsible for organizing and guiding the people who had been brought together. Without question John Wesley possessed unrivalled qualifications for the leadership of the Societies ; it is well for the world that he did not refuse to take up the position. The people of their own free will placed themselves ' under his care.' They made a wise choice of a leader, and Wesley was fortunate in obtaining a sphere in which he could accomplish his life-work. Southey's crude theory that ambition was the motive that induced Wesley to enter on his evangelizing work is not now seriously held by any one. After further consideration and enlightenment, he himself abandoned it. We mention it in order to say that, in the evil sense of the word, Wesley was singularly free from ambition. But the word need not be always used in that sense. In the good sense it cannot be doubted that Wesley was ambitious. He had seen a vision of a regenerated England and was intensely eager to realize it. He was an idealist dominated by the conviction that all men could be saved and brought to a knowledge of the truth. His own experience had shown him that the starting-point towards the deliverance of a man from sin is personal contact with Jesus Christ, and that the meeting-place of the Saviour and the sinner is the Cross. His first ' ambition ' was to possess the power to persuade sinners to repent and believe the good news of salvation through faith in the Crucified. But he had another ' ambition.' He saw that to lead a man to the Cross and then allow him to wander back into the world was to assist at a soul-tragedy. In the wilds of Georgia he had studied the history of the primitive Christian Church, and had mourned over the fact that ' the age of golden days ' closed so soon. He admired the original discipline of the Church, and was convinced that, if its main features could be reproduced, an opportunity would be given for the deliverance of men from sin and their growth in holiness. The ' vision splendid ' never faded altogether into ' the light of common day.' It constantly attended him. It shone with an arresting radiance when he found himself in his new, independent position. He felt that his opportunity had

come; he determined that he would use all his influence in attempting to realize in his Societies the deep spiritual experiences of the members of the Apostolic Church. In 1743 he published his brother's hymn on 'Primitive Christianity'; and, notwithstanding frequent failures and disappointments, he never abandoned his lofty ideal.

John Wesley was a sane 'enthusiast'; he was firm in his resistance to men who sought to attain ends without using means. As we follow him in his pursuit of his ideals we are impressed by his sagacity. He did not rush to his goal; he walked to it. In the organization of the Societies we witness the slow result achieved by his common sense, his perception of the practical value of suggested arrangements, his appreciation of the views of other people, his love of conference and counsel, his willingness always 'to be wiser to-day than the day before,' his open-mindedness and eager acceptance of new light, and his resistance to the singular doctrine that methods of work and government whose value has been tested and proved by long use should be cast aside merely because they are 'old.' In following the evolution of the administrative arrangements of the early Methodist Societies we see everywhere the signs of his calm and resolute spirit. Without haste, without rest, he quietly laid the firm foundations of the Methodist Church.

The swift increase of his Societies was watched by Wesley with considerable concern. He saw the perils of numerical success. He determined to know his people individually, and to this end he set apart many hours in which he visited them 'from house to house.' In April, 1741, there were a large number of sick persons in the Foundery Society, and their case appealed to him strongly. He made a list of them and settled a regular method of visiting them. Eight or ten of the members offered to help him, and with their assistance much was accomplished. In his Oxford days he had learned lessons which, during the whole of his after-life, filled him with strong compassion for the poor. Their sufferings made an irresistible appeal to him. He relieved them out of his private resources, and constantly denied himself in order that he might have something to spare for those who were fainting through hunger and weariness; but, as the poor listened to the gospel and came into his

Societies, he felt that all the members should stretch out a hand to help them. An example had been set by the Religious Societies in this matter, and the memories of the benevolences of the Holy Club and of the Societies in Georgia lighted him on his way. On May 7, 1741, he held a meeting of the Society at the Foundery; and, the case being laid before the members, they determined 'to give weekly a penny, or what they could afford, for the relief of the poor and sick.' The contributions were paid to the stewards, and were distributed by the sick-visitors and others who were selected for the purpose.

The care of the sick and poor was not the only matter that weighed on Wesley's mind. He was concerned about the admission of members to the Societies, their oversight, and their exclusion when their character and conduct showed that the continuance of their membership was undesirable. We have emphasized the fact that the preliminary condition imposed on those who asked for admission to the Society was lenient, and that Wesley never sought to alter it. There is evidence, however, to show that, when the 'on trial' stage was passed, the reception into 'full membership' was a definite act. In May, 1741, John Wesley, being in Bristol, spent most of one morning 'in speaking with the new members of the Society.' In the volume of *Hymns and Sacred Poems* published in the previous year there is a hymn entitled 'On the Admission of any Person into the Society.' One of its verses brings out the picture of the people standing as the minister gives the 'right hand of fellowship' to the new member.[1] When a member was 'fully received' the burden of responsibility for his oversight was greatly increased, and it was at this point that Wesley was confronted by serious difficulties. If a man met 'in band' his leader looked after him; but as the Societies swiftly increased the proportion of band members diminished. Wesley was convinced that it was his duty to possess 'a sure and thorough knowledge' of each person who placed himself under his care, and, for a time, he was baffled by his inability to attain that knowledge. He made a brave attempt to know his people. His *Journal* shows that his health failed from time to time at the period of which we are writing, but he struggled on with his work with pathetic

[1] The hymn, with a few alterations, is included in *The Methodist Hymn-book*. See No. 691.

invincibility. Notwithstanding all his efforts he was dissatisfied with himself, and longed to discover a more excellent way. As to the exclusion of members, his experience in Bristol and Kingswood had taught him a lesson ; and he found that the method he had adopted in those places answered its purpose when he applied it in London.

In addition to the spiritual care of the Societies Wesley found himself face to face with formidable difficulties. The preaching-houses he had built or purchased involved him in debt, and their repair and management caused him constant expense. It has been said that the highest proof of efficiency in an administrator is his power to delegate responsibility. Wesley possessed that power in a conspicuous degree. It was one of the secrets of his extraordinary success. While fully accepting the responsibility for final decisions he availed himself of all the help that trustworthy people could give him in every part of his work. It is not too much to say that without such assistance his mission would never have been accomplished. In the sphere of finance, it is clear that it was his intention to make duly appointed laymen responsible for the upkeep of the preaching-houses and the distribution of the moneys contributed by the Societies. He initiated his policy by appointing stewards in London and Bristol, and by forming stewards' meetings in each of these places. We have seen the stewards at work in the Foundery, and in May, 1741, he gives us information concerning Bristol. He tells us that the stewards ' receive and expend what is contributed weekly,' and he enables us to see the proceedings of a stewards' meeting. At a meeting he attended in Bristol it was found necessary to retrench the expenses, ' the contributions not answering thereto.' The decision of the meeting was that two of the schoolmasters at Bristol should be discharged, the present fund being barely sufficient to keep two masters and a mistress there and one master and a mistress at Kingswood. This statement shows that the stewards managed ' the weekly contribution,' part of which was applied to the payment of the teachers in the two schools. Such information enlarges our conception of the business of the stewards' meeting, and gives us a starting-point from which we shall be able to follow subsequent changes.

It was fortunate that the organization of the Societies was

so far advanced as to liberate Wesley from the necessity of constantly managing their financial affairs. The time was quickly approaching when his sphere of work was to be greatly extended; the whole kingdom was to become his 'parish.' The intimations of that extension were unmistakable. From his Bristol centre he was visiting towns and villages in the western country, where he preached and formed Societies. He and his brother had gone into Wales and joined Howell Harris in his evangelizing work. When doctrinal differences produced separation the Wesleys continued their work in the Principality; and in some of the towns they established their own Methodist Societies. In London the work was spreading quickly. New centres were being created on both sides of the river and in the adjacent country. Surveying the field of action, we are impressed by the fact that, at the commencement of 1741, their work lay chiefly in the south and west. But it soon spread into the Midlands and the north of England.

In trying to strike Wesley's northward path we are once more brought into association with Lady Huntingdon. We have seen that she possessed great influence with John and Charles Wesley. She had proved a wise counsellor in the disputes at Fetter Lane, in the case of the preaching of Maxfield, and in the rescue of Charles Wesley from the dangers of the doctrine of 'stillness.' We also know that John Wesley consulted her on critical questions such as the publication of his *Journal*, and we shall now proceed to record another instance in which her influence was felt in a matter of great importance.

On June 1, 1741, John Wesley rode from London to Enfield Chase, where Lady Huntingdon was in residence. It is probable that in their conversation reference was made to the evangelistic work that was being done in Leicestershire, in the neighbourhood of Donington Park, the country seat of the Earl of Huntingdon. Wesley would listen with deep interest when Lady Huntingdon told him of the successes of Benjamin Ingham, his old comrade in Georgia, who had formed a number of Societies in Leicestershire and elsewhere. He would be quick to note that Ingham had been assisted in his work by David Taylor, an upper servant in the Huntingdon family, who, as a lay preacher, had been very useful. Taylor has been described as a man of ability, knowledge, and wisdom. He had been brought into the light of the gospel through the

preaching of the Methodists. Earnestly desiring the conversion of his fellow servants and neighbours he told them of his experiences of salvation, and Lady Huntingdon encouraged him, and sent him into the villages and hamlets near Donington Park, where he preached with much success. His zeal carried him beyond Leicestershire into Derbyshire and Yorkshire. At Birstall, in the latter county, one of Ingham's Societies existed, and we know that Taylor preached there. Wesley's conversation with Lady Huntingdon kindled in him a desire to see the good work that was being done in the Midlands. On June 8 he set out from Enfield Chase, reached Northampton in the evening, and the next day arrived at Markfield, five or six miles beyond Leicester, where he found a home with Mr. Ellis. He visited Ingham's Societies in the neighbourhood, but was disappointed to find they had fallen under the influence of the 'still brethren.' They had accepted the usual instruction: 'If you will believe, be still. Do not pretend to do good, which you cannot do till you believe; and leave off what you call the means of grace, such as prayer and running to church and sacrament.' Wesley had seen the effects of this teaching in London, and he watched its influence in Leicestershire with grave forebodings. Although his visit to the Midlands was in some points unsatisfactory, one incident must have given him pleasure. Some months before he had met a Nottingham man in London named Howe, who had been deeply impressed under the preaching there. Howe had bought one of the Methodist hymn-books, and his heart had been stirred by the appeals and teaching it contained. On his return home in 1740 he preached in the market-place and gathered a Society around him. On June 11 Wesley went to Nottingham, stayed with Howe, and attended the meeting of his Society in the evening. The room, which used to be crowded, was not half full; not one person who came in used any prayer at all; every one immediately sat down, and began either talking to his neighbour or looking about to see who was there. When Wesley began to pray there appeared a general surprise, none offering to kneel down, and those who stood chose the most easy, indolent posture. He looked for the hymn-book which he knew Howe had brought from London; it had vanished, and there was no Bible on the desk. In the room, however, he saw the Moravian hymns and Count

Zinzendorf's sermons. With a heavy heart he gave an exposition, and on the next morning he described the fruits of faith—'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'[1] In the evening he preached in the church at Markfield. On Sunday, June 14, he rode to Nottingham again, and at eight o'clock in the morning took his stand on the steps of the cross in the market-place and preached to an immense multitude on 'The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.' With scarcely an exception the crowd listened eagerly to his words. He was once more in his element, and rejoiced as he called lost sinners to God. Riding back to Markfield, he read the evening service in the church. Being informed that abundance of people were unable to get into the building he went out to the crowd and preached in the open air. On that day he preached again in the church, expounding the incident of the woman 'who loved much because she had much forgiven.' It was a day to be remembered. He had preached in a market-place, a churchyard, and a church. His ideal had been realized. He would have gladly devoted himself to similar work throughout the whole of the kingdom, but he knew that the opposition of bishops and of nearly the whole of the clergy made the repetition of such experiences impossible. He had to be content with storing up a beautiful memory, and with the knowledge that he had now opened his commission in the Midlands.

During the months of June and July Wesley spent several days in Oxford. The time when he had to preach before the University was approaching, and he was uncertain as to the theme of his sermon. He consulted Gambold, who told him that all were so prejudiced against him that they would mind nothing he said. He was aware of that fact, but felt that he must deliver his own soul. These visits to Oxford brought him little encouragement. In the University the days of the Holy Club had passed. In the town a few Religious Societies survived. Summing up the case, he says, 'I found a great change among the poor people here. Out of twenty-five or thirty weekly communicants only two were left. Not one continued to attend the daily prayer of the Church, and those few that were once united together were now torn asunder

[1]For Howe's Society see Rev. George Lester's article in *W.H.S. Proceedings*, v., 167.

and scattered abroad.' His old friend Gambold honestly told him he was ashamed of his company, and for that reason declined to go with him to the meeting of one of the Societies. He must have felt that he was in a new world, and that the glories of Oxford were fading away. He worked at his sermon, read in the Lincoln College library, and looked onward to the day when he would preach in St. Mary's once more. The choice of a text continued to embarrass him. He seems to have met his difficulty by preparing two sermons and by postponing his decision to a later day. After his death, among his papers a mutilated manuscript sermon was discovered on the text, 'How is the faithful city become an harlot!' There can be little doubt it was designed to be preached before the University; it is dated June 24, 1741, and the entry for the day in the *Journal* shows that he had been busy transcribing extracts from Bishop Bull's *Harmonia Apostolica*, some of which appear in the manuscript. But on July 3 there is a jotting in the *Diary* to the effect that he began a sermon on Acts xxvi. 28. We find him occupied with it for several days. The contrast between the two sermons is striking. The former is searching and unsparing in its denunciation of University men who, in doctrine and practice, 'had departed from their Lord.' As we read it in Wesley's *Works*[1] its words still smite and sting. The other sermon, on 'The Almost Christian,' while equally faithful, differs in spirit. On the ground of utility few will doubt its superior value to the sermon first composed; but Wesley's indecision remained. The editor of the standard *Journal* is probably correct in his suggestion concerning the influence that decided his ultimate choice. On June 28 he had preached in the open air in Charles Square, Hoxton, to the largest congregation he had ever seen there. His text was, 'Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.' That same night he went to Lady Huntingdon's and read a sermon to her. They continued reading and discussing until two o'clock in the morning. We have no definite knowledge concerning the sermon that was read, but the long discussion suggests that it was one likely to raise serious controversy. If the sermon on 'the once faithful city that had become an harlot' was read, it is probable that Lady Huntingdon expressed her opinion that it would only irritate

[1] See vii., 452–462, 8vo ed.

the people to whom it was delivered and embitter their prejudice against the preacher. Why not try another text? The University needed to hear the truths preached to the crowd in Charles Square; would it not be well to give the authorities and the gownsmen a chance of listening to them? Whatever may have been the cause, we know that on July 25 Wesley preached in St. Mary's on 'The Almost Christian.' There was a large congregation, a company of his friends from London, Bristol, and Kingswood being present. At Bristol at ten o'clock Charles Wesley and some of the members of the Society had assembled and prayed for a blessing on the sermon. Their prayers were answered. John Wesley delivered a great message which still echoes in the hearts of the Methodist people.

After preaching at Oxford Wesley returned to the Foundery and devoted himself to caring for the Societies in London. In addition to those which met at the Foundery, Greyhound Lane, in Whitechapel, and Long Lane, Southwark, there were others which call for attention. On July 10 Wesley preached at Short's Gardens, Drury Lane. Experience had taught him that it was little use to preach in a neighbourhood without forming a Society and securing a room for its accommodation. He obtained a room, and on Friday, January 22, 1742, he met the Society there for the first time. It is easy to overlook the upstair room in the house in the narrow street that runs between Drury Lane and Neal Street, but we must keep our eye on it, for it is one of the significant centres of early Methodist work in London. Leaving it for a time, we journey eastward. Reaching Wapping, we find out Great Hermitage Street, close to the banks of the Thames. In this street, in 1741, there was a small chapel, used by Huguenot families residing in the neighbourhood, which accommodated between two and three hundred people. Its minister was Dr. Deleznot, who knew Wesley and frequently importuned him to preach in his chapel. Wesley was accustomed to visit Wapping, as a Society had been formed there. On August 2 he complied with the Huguenot pastor's request. From the account he gives us it would appear that the chapel had been generously placed at his disposal for the accommodation of the members of his Society. That seems evident from the fact that the service of the Church of England was used, John Meriton,

a clergyman from the Isle of Man, reading the prayers.[1] The little chapel was filled by a congregation of two hundred members of Wesley's London Societies, and to them the Lord's Supper was administered. Following this service, on four succeeding Sundays Wesley preached in the same place and administered the sacrament to four other groups of Society members. 'By this means,' he says, 'all the Society attended in five weeks. Only those who had the sacrament at their parish churches I advised to attend there.' As the members of the Societies in London at that time numbered one thousand we see that, by this arrangement, it became possible for all of them to come to the Lord's Table. The chapel was used for some time by the Methodists, and it assisted Wesley to solve one of his gravest difficulties.

Wesley's visit to Leicestershire and some conversation he had with Benjamin Ingham must have convinced him that it was impossible to work harmoniously with people who were actively opposed to his doctrinal convictions and methods of work, but he hesitated to take a step which was absolutely necessary if his own mission was to be accomplished. He was strongly opposed to Molther's teaching concerning 'stillness,' and he watched its influence on Ingham's Societies with regret. But his association with the Moravians had left memories that were sacred, and it was with great reluctance that he finally decided to stand apart from them. His decision was brought about by a conversation with Count Zinzendorf in Gray's Inn Gardens on September 3, 1741.[2] The principal topic discussed concerned Christian perfection, on which subject Zinzendorf affirmed that Wesley had 'changed his religion.' He said, 'I acknowledge no inherent perfection in this life. This is the error of errors. I pursue it through the world with fire and sword. I trample upon it; I devote it to utter destruction. Christ is our sole perfection. Whoever follows inherent perfection denies Christ.' After listening to this outburst Wesley proceeded to explain what he meant by Christian perfection. Eliciting several admissions from Zinzendorf, he said, 'The dispute is altogether about words. You grant that a believer

[1] Mr. Meriton was one of the first clergymen to join the Wesleys in their itinerant work. Until 1753, when he died, he often shared their travels, labours, and perils.

[2] In Wesley's *Journal* the most material part of this conversation is given in Latin; a translation appears in Moore's *Life of Wesley*. See *Journal*, ii., 488–490; Moore, i. 481–488.

is altogether holy in heart and life; that he loves God with all his heart and serves Him with all his powers. I desire nothing more. I mean nothing else by the term "perfection" or "Christian holiness."' The Count would not accept this definition. He singled out for special attack Wesley's statement that every believer, while he increases in love, increases equally in holiness. He admitted that a Christian should grow in grace, but denied any growth in holiness. He said, 'Whenever any one is justified, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit dwell in his heart, and from that moment his heart is as pure as it ever will be. A babe in Christ is as pure in heart as a father in Christ. There is no difference.' Wesley then asked, 'Do we not, while we deny ourselves, die more and more to the world and live to God?' Zinzendorf, speaking for himself and those who were associated with him, replied, 'We reject all self-denial. We trample upon it. We do, as believers, whatsoever we will, and nothing more. We laugh at all mortification. No purification precedes perfect love.' Southey, in commenting on this last statement, says, 'If this meant all that it expresses it would indeed be a perilous doctrine. But it often happens that language equally indiscreet is innocently intended, and less evil produced by it than might reasonably be apprehended, because the intention is understood.'[1] But John Wesley was familiar with such teaching, and had witnessed its disastrous effects among people who were incapable of making fine distinctions when they listened to indiscreet utterances 'innocently intended.' He knew the danger lurking in the assertion, 'We do, as believers, whatsoever we will, and nothing more.' Along that path impetuous men had rushed into Antinomianism. The conversation closed and the two men separated.

His path being more clearly defined, Wesley addressed himself to his evangelizing and pastoral mission. On September 22, he returned to Bristol, meeting his brother there, and also Mr. Robert Jones, of Fonmon Castle, Glamorganshire, who had become a firm friend of the Wesleys and their influential helper during their visits to the Principality. Mr. Jones, who was a Justice of the Peace, had rendered good service in Bristol on the day when John Wesley returned to the city.

[1] *Life of Wesley*, 220, Bohn's ed.

With Charles Wesley he had waited on a magistrate who strongly sympathized with the attempts being made to destroy the work that was being done in Kingswood. Cennick's 'house' had been seized, and the colliers' school was threatened. Confronted with a fellow magistrate, in the person of Mr. Jones, he became embarrassed and offered lame excuses for his conduct. In answer to the remarks that the preaching of the Methodists in Kingswood occasioned an increase in the number of the poor, and that the school would make a good workhouse, Charles Wesley said, 'None of our Society is chargeable to you; even those who were so before they heard us, or who spent all their wages at the ale-house, now never go there at all, but keep their money to maintain their families and have to give to those that want. Notorious swearers have now only the praises of God in their mouths. The good done among them is indisputable; our worst enemies cannot deny it. None who hears us continues either to swear or drink.' 'If I thought so,' the magistrate replied, 'I would come and hear you myself.' Charles Wesley asked him to do so, adding that the grace of God was as sufficient for him as for the colliers, and who knew but he might be converted among them? Mr. Jones, who wished to know the pretence on which Cennick's 'house' had been seized, put a question to the magistrate, but failed to receive a satisfactory reply. The magistrate affirmed that he himself was of Gamaliel's mind, and thereby gave Charles Wesley an opening to urge him to follow that sage's advice—'Refrain from these men and let them alone.'[1]

In October John Wesley paid two visits to Wales, and at the close of the month, on his return to Bristol, the hand of heavy sickness was laid on him. The malaria of Georgia still haunted him, and it was in much weakness that he continued his work to the end of the year. But he toiled on. The care of the Societies weighed on him. In their condition there was much to encourage but not a little to depress. In examining the Bristol Society on December 9, he was humbled by the loss of more than thirty members, whom he was obliged to exclude 'as no longer adorning the gospel of Christ.' He believed it best to declare openly in the Society both their names and the reasons why they were excluded. This having

[1] C. Wesley's *Journal*, i., 301.

been done, the Society 'cried unto God that this might be for their edification, and not for destruction.' On December 27 he pursued the same course in London. Against this loss of members we must place the formation of a new Society in Bath on December 15. On that day there was a hard frost, and Wesley was so far recovered from his sickness that he felt strong enough to walk from Bristol to Bath. Reaching Bath, he had a conversation of several hours 'with one who had lived above seventy, and studied divinity above thirty years; yet remission of sins was quite a new doctrine to him.' It is probable that the person visited was the celebrated Dr. George Cheyne, the brother-in-law of Dr. Middleton of Bristol, Charles Wesley's friend and physician.[1] The *Dictionary of National Biography* mentions the 'more serious' aspect in which Dr. Cheyne came to regard religious matters about this time. In the evening John Wesley took down the names of some who desired to strengthen each other's hands in God. 'Thus,' says he, 'the bread we have cast on the waters is found again after many days.'

[1] See *Journal*, ii., 517 *note*.

V

THE MIDLANDS AND THE NORTH

THE first days of 1742 found John Wesley in London prostrated by a sharp attack of fever. He recovered and resumed his work. He was entering on a year that severely taxed his strength. In many respects it was to be a notable year in the history of Methodism. It was to witness a large increase in the United Societies, and a striking improvement in their organization. Liberated from the embarrassments inseparable from his connexion with the Religious Societies, he was free to enter on paths which conducted him to his life-work—the evangelization of the neglected masses of the English people.

On Sunday, February 7, John Wesley reached Kingswood, where he met many of his friends from Bath, Bristol, and Wales. After rejoicing in their company he went to Bristol, and spent some days in speaking 'severally' with those who desired to remain in the United Society, and 'to watch over each other in love.' He placed supreme importance on the practice of Christian fellowship; not only on account of the spiritual comfort it ministered to the individual, but because it secured a means of mutual edification and was an invaluable help to those who, especially at the outset of their religious life, were assailed by persistent temptations to forsake Christ. In the wilds of Georgia his theory that holiness was best pursued in solitude had been corrected. Clear-sightedness, that sure sign of spiritual health, had come to him in the midst of work for his Master which he had done in association with others. It is true that he never lost his appreciation of 'the bliss of solitude'; but he never loved it so much as to resist the beckoning of the uplifted hand that summoned him to the multitude. He was deeply concerned by the failure of so many in London, Bristol, and Kingswood who had not 'adorned the gospel of Christ,' and he had come to the conclusion that such failures might be prevented or lessened in number if a more efficient

method of association and supervision could be discovered. He discharged his own duty and oversight with conspicuous fidelity, but as he was compelled to exercise a fugitive ministry he was conscious of his inability to carry alone the burden of effective supervision. His thoughts ran in the direction of a plan which would make the members of the Societies the guardians and helpers of each other; but, for a time, no steady light fell on his perplexing problem.

Monday, February 15, 1742, is a conspicuous date in the Methodist calendar. A meeting was then held in Bristol, at which many were present. They had assembled to discover a proper method for discharging the public debt. The condition of the 'Room' in the Horsefair was unsatisfactory. It had been built in a hurry; it showed signs of structural weakness, and was a source of constant expense. Money had been borrowed for its erection; the loan might be called in at any time, and several hints of such a calamity had been given. John Wesley had taken on himself the burden of the legal obligation of the debt, and the society felt he ought to be relieved from it. When the business of the meeting commenced the question was put: 'How shall we pay the debt upon the preaching-house?' The Society in Bristol included several sea-going captains, and one of them, Captain Foy, stood up and said, 'Let every one in the Society give a penny a week, and it will easily be done.' Some one objected that many of the members were poor and had not a penny to spare. The captain replied: 'True; then put ten or twelve of them to me. Let each of these give what they can weekly, and I will supply what is wanting.' The plan was welcomed, and many others made the same offer. It was agreed that every member who was able should contribute a penny a week towards the debt; that the whole Society should be divided into little companies or 'classes'; and that one person in the 'class,' to be called a 'leader,' should receive the contributions of the rest and bring them to the stewards weekly. Wesley appointed the 'leaders,' and assigned a 'class' of about twelve members to each of them.[1]

Captain Foy's suggestion is familiar to all students of Methodist history. Its chief merit as a financial proposal was not the amount of the contribution. Wesley had already

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xiii., 226, 8vo ed.; *Journal*, ii., 528.

discovered the power of the penny. The penny collection for the relief of the poor was in existence, and the stewards met weekly to receive it. The novel feature of the captain's suggestion is its recognition of the principle that, in the Methodist Society, the richer members should make up the deficiency in a common fund which arises from the inability of the poorer members to contribute to it. That principle still governs the whole system of Methodist finance.

The proposal of Captain Foy helped to solve the financial problem in Bristol, but John Wesley soon saw that it gave him light on his pastoral difficulty. Shortly after the plan came into action one of the leaders informed him that during his pence collecting, when calling at a house, he found a member quarrelling with his wife, and at another place he saw a member who was 'in drink.' The thought flashed through Wesley's mind, 'This is the very thing we wanted. The leaders are the persons who may not only receive the contributions but also watch over the souls of their brethren.' He saw that by this means it could be easily found if any of the members grew weary or faint, and help could then be speedily administered; and that, if any walked disorderly, they could be quickly discovered, and either amended or dismissed.[1] He possessed an intuitive perception which enabled him to recognize a plan that would work. Seeing its practical value he tested it by experiment; and if it answered its purpose, he forthwith adopted it. In London, on March 25, he laid the Bristol scheme before several 'earnest and sensible men' whom he had appointed to meet him. He explained to them the great difficulty he had long found of knowing the people who desired to be under his care. After much discourse they all agreed there could be no better way to come to a sure, thorough knowledge of each person than to divide the Society into classes like those at Bristol, and place them under the supervision of leaders in whom Wesley could most confide. He closes his description of this meeting with the memorable words, 'This was the origin of our classes in London, for which I can never sufficiently thank God, the unspeakable usefulness of the institution having ever since been more and more manifest.' His account of the consultation in London shows that he had matured his ideas. He saw that the leaders should

[1] *Works*, xiii., 226, 8vo ed.

be more than collectors of pence; that they should become fellow workers with him in the spiritual oversight of the little groups of members confided to their care. It was some months before the 'business' of the leaders received precise definition, but it is clear that from the outset of the new arrangement in London the leaders visited the members assigned to them weekly at the houses where they resided; they received what the members were willing to give toward the relief of the poor; and, by conversation and observation, they attained an insight into the spiritual condition of those entrusted to their care. It was not long before the class-system in a more developed form was established in all the Societies.

During Wesley's visit to London, which lasted about two months, several events occurred which call for record. On Wednesday, March 24, he preached for the last time in the French chapel at Wapping. The arrangement which had assisted him to secure the administration of the sacrament to the members of the London Societies being suspended, he kept it in mind, and was not without hope that it could be realized in some other place, and in a more permanent manner. On April 14, at his request, a few persons met him for the purpose of united prayer for Charles Wesley, who, at two o'clock on that day, was to preach before the University of Oxford. They continued in supplication much longer than they had designed, and, before separating, they were convinced that their petitions were granted. Charles Wesley's sermon on 'Awake, thou that sleepest!' is well known. It is a clear and searching evangelical discourse, full of persuasive appeals to intellect and conscience. Its special application to the University comes at the close. In solemn and weighty words the preacher uttered his warning. He declared that God's judgements were abroad in the earth, and that there was reason to expect He would come quickly and remove the candlestick out of its place except they repented and returned to 'the principles of the Reformation' and the truth and simplicity of the gospel. He did not shrink from telling his audience that it was possible they were resisting the last effort of divine grace to save them. He warned them that, perhaps, they had wellnigh filled up the measure of their iniquities by rejecting the counsel of God against them-

selves, and by casting out His messengers. The appeal, which was delivered with restrained passion and was unspoilt by fierce invective, must have impressed those who were worthy to listen to it. Then the preacher, looking up to heaven, cried: 'Oh, may we speedily see the things that make for our peace before they are hid from our eyes! Turn Thou us, O good Lord, and let Thine anger cease from us. O Lord, look down from heaven, behold and visit this vine, and cause us to know the time of our visitation. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name. O deliver us, and be merciful to our sins, for Thy name's sake! And so we will not go back from Thee. Oh, let us live, and we shall call upon Thy name. Turn us again, O Lord of Hosts! Show the light of Thy countenance and we shall be whole.' Surely there must have been in that audience some devout hearers who bowed their heads and whispered 'Amen' to such petitions.

On April 9 the first watch-night was held in the United Societies in London. John Wesley's study of primitive Christianity had made him familiar with the idea of services held at the noon of night. When he visited the Moravians in Germany in 1738 he found such meetings in existence; and, at a later period, on a memorable occasion, he shared in the great blessing that came down on the company gathered together in the room of the Fetter Lane Religious Society. But the introduction of the watch-night service into the list of the regular meetings of the Methodist Societies was caused by one of those incidents which illustrate Wesley's readiness to adopt the ideas of others when he was convinced of their practical value. For that and other reasons it will be useful to recall the circumstances that led to the holding of watch-nights in the United Societies.

Shortly before the time when the watch-night was held in London John Wesley, being in Bristol, was told that certain of the Kingswood colliers who, before their conversion, had been accustomed to spend their Saturday evenings in the ale-house, were meeting in the school. The man who was foremost in effecting this change was James Rogers, whose fiddle had often led the 'revellings and frantic mirth' of the crowd in the public-house. He was well known in the Wood. He loved his fiddle with the indescribable passion of the musician who knows how to make it whisper, and sigh, and sing. His

skill caused him to be constantly invited to ale-houses, where he was exposed to the full stress of temptation. After his conversion he went through sore tribulation, and resolved on a sacrifice that must have cut him to the quick. He looked at his fiddle; he was convinced that so long as he possessed it his life would be the scene of battles in which probably he would be defeated. So the tragedy was enacted; the loved companion was broken in pieces. We listen to the harsh sounds with sympathy and with regret. But those were strenuous days, in which tempted Christian men thought no sacrifice too costly if it helped them to be 'faithful unto death.'

When James Rogers and his Methodist comrades left the roysterers of the public-house they met in the school; and, when they could spare the time, they spent the greater part of the night there in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. Some did not approve of such proceedings. They advised Wesley to stop the meetings. After full consideration it struck him that similar meetings might be made of more general use in his Societies. He proceeded with caution. He sent word to the colliers that he designed to watch with them on the Friday nearest the full moon, that they might have light to the meeting and back again. He gave public notice on the Sunday preceding the meeting that it was his intention to preach at the watch-night; and, at the same time, he expressed his desire that they only would meet him who could do so without prejudice to their business or families. On the Friday abundance of people came. He began preaching between eight and nine o'clock, and he says, 'We continued till a little beyond the noon of night, singing, praying, and praising God.' Having commenced these monthly meetings in Kingswood, they were soon introduced into Bristol and London. Charles Wesley entered heartily into the new services, and composed hymns for them which were sung with deep feeling. In *Hymns and Sacred Poems* published in 1742 two hymns appeared which bear striking marks of their origin. 'Oft have we passed the guilty night,' was evidently composed for Kingswood colliers. The other, 'Hearken to the solemn voice,' was the hymn with which the first watch-nights commonly concluded; and when it was sung, deep awe rested on the congregations.

On April 23 John Wesley spent an agreeable hour with

Whitefield. Frank conversation drew the old friends nearer together, and convinced Wesley that Whitefield earnestly desired 'to join hand in hand with all who loved the Lord Jesus Christ.' From that time their temporary estrangement ceased; each went his own way, but they were one in heart and aim. In the following month they accompanied each other to interviews with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London. From Wesley's remark, 'I trust if we should be called to appear before princes, we should not be ashamed,' we conclude they had been summoned to these interviews. The provoking cause of the summons may have been the services held by Whitefield in Moorfields during Easter week in the preceding month.[1] Those services had been extraordinarily successful, and merit Tyerman's eulogium. He says, 'Seldom do the annals of the Christian Church present a more remarkable example of the power of gospel truth. Here were assembled thousands—"the devil's castaways," as Whitefield would have called them—the very scum of London's teeming population, many of them clad in rags, and almost all of them labelled with the marks of vice and wretchedness; and yet, even in such a congregation, hundreds become penitent, and begin to call upon God for mercy. Even the wildest mob only need "the truth as it is in Jesus" simply and faithfully proclaimed; for there is always in that glorious truth a something which meets the yearnings of the most degraded soul. Whitefield's Eastertide services in the midst of the Moorfields' mobs were not unworthy of the name he gave them—a glorious Pentecost.' Whatever may have been the cause of the summons, or the topics of conversation between the Archbishop and Bishop and Wesley and Whitefield, neither of the two evangelists was deflected from the course he was pursuing.

It was in this month of May that another crucial event occurred. We have followed Wesley in his journey to the Midlands, and have watched the gradual extension of the boundary-line of his work. We must now follow him to the extreme north of England. On May 17 he had designed to set out for Bristol in answer to an urgent summons from his brother, but in the afternoon he received a letter from Lady Huntingdon, who was at Donington Park, beseeching him to

[1] See Tyerman's *Whitefield*, i., 554–557.

come at once to Donington and minister to Miss Cowper, who was dying and wished to see him before she passed away. He abandoned the Bristol journey and made all haste to the death-bed of his friend. A short time before he had written to his brother and to Lady Huntingdon discussing the expediency of a journey into Yorkshire; and Lady Huntingdon had strongly approved of the project and pressed him to visit the colliers in the north. With more than one object in his mind he set out, and on May 22 he reached Donington Park. Miss Cowper was just alive. He ministered to her for three days, and rejoiced in the grace of God, 'whereby she was filled with a hope full of immortality.' During this visit he took counsel with Lady Huntingdon, who advised him to make his way to Newcastle-on-Tyne. On May 25 he set out on horseback, being accompanied by John Taylor, one of Lady Huntingdon's servants.

The road to the north lay through Birstall, a small town that crowned the top of a hill in Yorkshire. It was the home of John Nelson, the sturdy mason who occupies so conspicuous a place in the annals of Methodism. After leaving London and returning to Birstall, he had repeatedly invited Wesley to visit the town. Wesley, finding himself there, made inquiries for Nelson, learned he was at home, sent for him, saw him at the inn, and then went with him to his house. Nearly two years had elapsed since the two men had walked together from a sacramental service in St. Paul's to the Upper Moorfields, talking quietly on the way. Nelson had much to tell Wesley concerning his experiences since that time. On his return to Birstall he had told the story of his conversion to some of his former acquaintances who came to see him. They were amazed at his assurance that he knew his sins to be forgiven. He explained the way by which he had reached that assurance, and urged them to seek the blessing he had found. The news spread abroad, and soon the neighbours crowded his little room. The step from simple witness-bearing to preaching in Nelson's case was short. Many persons eagerly listened to him and were influenced by what he said. One of Ingham's Societies had been formed in the town; he frequented its meetings, but missed the teaching, tone, and spirit to which he had been accustomed in London. He longed for a visit from Wesley; but the

months passed and he longed in vain. Then, to his great joy, Wesley arrived in Birstall. In close conversation they established each other in the faith, and a friendship was formed which endured through the whole of Nelson's life. Wesley was especially interested in the story of Nelson's work as a preacher. In his *Short History of the People called Methodists* [1] he sums up its results. He tells us that Nelson had been calling sinners to repentance for some time at Birstall and the adjoining towns in the West Riding of Yorkshire. His labour had not been in vain. Many of the greatest profligates in all the country had been changed. Their blasphemies were turned to praise. Abandoned drunkards had become sober, and Sabbath-breakers had remembered the Sabbath to keep it holy. The town of Birstall wore a new face, and, says Wesley, 'Such a change did God work by the artless testimony of one plain man.' It seemed like the story of Kingswood repeated in the north, with this difference—it was the story of the blessing of God resting on the work of a lay preacher.

As we listen to the conversation in Nelson's house we are impressed by a fact which has not been sufficiently emphasized by some who have described the course of the great Revival. While doing justice to the importance of Wesley's direct work in the evangelization of the country they have failed to give sufficient value to his indirect influence. No one can read such books as *The Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*, and the intensely interesting local histories of Methodism, without learning that in many parts of the country the original Societies were gathered and kept together by laymen. Some of those laymen had been influenced by Wesley's teaching, but for a time he had no personal knowledge of them and their work. Among the crowds that attended the services in the 'Rooms' at London and Bristol, or who heard him preach in the open air, there were men who were pricked in their heart, who rejoiced in the remission of their sins and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. With the love of God and their neighbour kindled within them they went away from the great towns. Scattered over the country, like John Nelson they told their experience and gathered around them little groups of people, who banded themselves together to strengthen each other in the

[1] *Works*, xiii., 310, 8vo ed.

Lord. Then a day came when their work was revealed to Wesley. They requested him to come over and help them, and cheerfully placed themselves under his care. It is impossible to understand the swift extension of Methodism if we lose sight of the influence of 'the dispersion.' We must not forget the men and women who, in little towns and villages, bore their witness to the truth of the doctrines that had led them out of darkness into light. It is possible by diligent search to recover some of their names, but an impenetrable veil covers most of them. They share the common fate of many of the pioneers in great religious revivals; but a day will come when the veil shall be lifted and we shall know those who, in rough places, prepared the way of the Lord and made His paths straight.

On Wednesday, May 26, at noon, John Wesley preached on the top of Birstall Hill to a crowd of people. In the afternoon he talked severally with those 'who had tasted the grace of God.' He found that all of them had been vehemently pressed not to run about to church and sacrament, and had been advised to keep their religion to themselves, to be 'still,' and not to talk about what they had experienced. The source of such teaching is easily traced. It was directly opposed to the views and convictions of Wesley and Nelson, and it was clear that the time was approaching when it would be wise to organize those who rejected it into a Methodist Society. At eight o'clock in the evening Wesley preached on the side of Dewsbury Moor, about two miles from Birstall, and earnestly exhorted all who believed to wait upon God in His own ways, and to let their light shine before men. It must have brought great joy to Nelson to hear him once more, and to receive a confirmation of the doctrines he had himself preached in the midst of much opposition. The next day the two friends said farewell. John Wesley and his travelling companion, John Taylor, mounted their horses and rode towards the north.

John Wesley was sensitive to the appeal of scenery that wore a gentle aspect. Familiar with the flat lands of Lincolnshire, the avenues and meadows of Oxford, the woods and solemn silences of Georgia, his eyes brightened when he saw a landscape that was steeped in sunshine or touched with the tender light of evening. The readers of his *Journal* will

remember many little pictures of sylvan and rural loveliness that have shone for a moment before their eyes as they glanced at a few words in which he has immortalized the glory of a passing day. For Nature in her sterner aspects his enthusiasm was not keen. Huge masses of frowning mountains, and bleak, wind-swept, desolate moors did not charm him. Riding towards the Tyne, he must have often fixed his undivided attention on the book he was reading. It was Xenophon's *Memorable Things of Socrates*. Escaping from the thrall of the present we must realize the fact that at the time of which we are writing there were no large towns in Yorkshire or Durham. It will help to disenchant us if we remember that, so late as 1775, the population of Leeds amounted only to 17,121 persons. When Wesley and John Taylor were making their way to the far north they rode through a sparsely inhabited country. At wide intervals they passed a little town with a few thousand people in it ; but, more commonly, riding through scattered villages, they emerged on highlands and moorlands that seemed to be given up to the lapwing and curlew. As they went farther north they saw ground broken up and blackened by the work of the pitmen ; and from cottage doors women and children looked at the travellers with wonder. Then as they drew nearer to Gateshead, they caught sight of the masts and spars of the ships on the Tyne, and they knew that their lonely ride was coming to an end.

When John Wesley was in Georgia we know that he read the *Life of Bernard Gilpin*, and did so on one occasion 'as a preparation for preaching.' Following the horsemen across the moors we have often thought of that 'Apostle of the North.' The incidents of his life have shone before us, but we have been specially arrested by visions of the work he did when he was the rector of Houghton-le-Spring. In the days of Queen Elizabeth 'the reformed religion' once more triumphed, and Bernard Gilpin passed through a great experience. Refraining, so far as possible, from controversy, he determined to read the Bible daily, and became 'a man of one book.' He was so awakened by the thought of his responsibilities as a minister that he was stirred up to seek and save sinful men, not only in his own parish, but wherever he found them. He had 'a solemn feeling that he was in some measure chargeable with those vices which he

had it in his power to rebuke or repress.' That conviction drove him beyond the boundaries of his parish, and made him an itinerant preacher. He never forgot that his first duty was to care for his own parishioners, but having attended to that duty, or having provided for its discharge by his curate, he could not resist the cry of the lost sheep in the wilderness. He went out into the most neglected parishes in Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland, Yorkshire, and Cheshire, preaching constantly to the people. In his evangelizing tours he stayed two or three days in the places visited. He assembled the people in the church if he found one near at hand; if not, he preached in barns or any other large building. He searched out and found the wildest men in 'the Debatable Land' and elsewhere. Bishop Carleton says that the half-barbarous and rustic people esteemed him 'a very prophet.' He talked to them in the plainest language, and declared to his hearers 'the duties they owed to God, their neighbours, and themselves, and referred them to the end of all things and the means of present and future happiness.' Many who had never before entertained a serious thought were brought to a sense of religion, and were turned from sin to God.[1]

As we watch the wanderings of Bernard Gilpin one persistent question demands an answer: 'By what right did he invade the parishes of other men?' The answer given by Hone is very illuminating to students of Methodism. When appointed to Norton, a Crown living, Gilpin preached before Edward VI. His sermon arrested the attention of several noblemen who were present. One of them was William Cecil, the King's secretary, who afterwards became Lord Burghley. Cecil obtained for him 'a general licence of preaching, a privilege granted to but few, and to them on account of approved worth.'[2] Gilpin explains that his licence was 'as a general preacher throughout the kingdom, so long as the King lived.' The death of the King caused this licence to lapse, but in the reign of Elizabeth he possessed 'a general licence of preaching' of which he made a most important use. Lord Burghley's friendship was invaluable, and he went hither and thither preaching the gospel without let or hindrance. Some will be tempted to ask why John Wesley did not receive

[1] See Hone's *Lives of Eminent Christians*, ii., 15, S.P.C.K. ed.

[2] Hone, ii., 13.

a similar licence. That question provokes another. If he had possessed it, would there be a Methodist Church in the world to-day?

Wesley and his companion reached Newcastle on Friday, May 28. They rested at Gateshead before entering the town. Once more we must erase from our memory the impressions produced by our visits to the present city. Tyerman has summarized facts derived from Bourne's and Brand's *Histories* of Newcastle, and we gladly avail ourselves of his labours. He says:

> This northern metropolis was then widely different from what it is at present. Then the only streets of any consequence were Pilgrim Street, Newgate Street, Westgate Street, the Side, and Sandgate. On the south of Westgate Street there was nothing but open country. Between Westgate Street and Newgate Street the only buildings were the Vicarage and St. John's Church, whilst between Newgate Street and the upper part of Pilgrim Street almost the only edifice was the house of Franciscan Friars. On the east of Pilgrim Street were open fields, and on the north nothing but a few straggling houses. The town was surrounded with a wall having turrets, towers, and gates. On what is now the centre of the town stood the princely dwelling of Sir William Blackett, environed with extensive pleasure-grounds, adorned with trees and statues. There were five churches—St. John's, in which, besides the Sunday services, there were public prayers three times every week; St. Andrew's, where, in addition to services on Sabbaths, prayers were read every Wednesday and Friday morning; Allhallows; St. Nicholas's, in which there was public service twice daily; and the Church of St. Thomas, at the entrance of the street on Newcastle Bridge. The Roman Catholics had a chapel at the Nuns; the Quakers a meeting-house in Pilgrim Street, nearly opposite the Pilgrim's Inn; and the Dissenters two or three chapels in different parts, and also a burial ground near Ballast Hills.[1]

Having refreshed themselves at a small house in the Low Street of Gateshead, Wesley and his companion crossed the river and entered Newcastle. As they walked through the streets they were surprised. Wesley says, 'So much drunkenness, cursing, and swearing (even from the mouths of little children) do I never remember to have seen and heard before in so small a compass of time. Surely this place is ripe for Him who "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."' Resting on the Saturday, he opened his evangelistic campaign on Sunday, May 30, at seven in the

[1] *Life of Wesley*, i., 385.

morning. He walked down Sandgate, ' the poorest and most contemptible part of the town,' and, standing at the end of the street with John Taylor, they began to sing the hundredth psalm. Three or four people came out to see what was the matter. Excitement spread, and soon three or four hundred crowded around the singers. Wesley preached, and before he had finished the congregation had increased to nearly fifteen hundred. His text shows the character of the message he delivered : ' He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.' The people lingered, gaping and staring with astonishment. He then said, ' If you desire to know who I am, my name is John Wesley. At five in the evening, with God's help, I design to preach here again.' The news flew through the town, and when he took his stand on the hill which he had selected for his station he found it covered with people from the top to the bottom. Never had he seen so large a number gathered together, either in Moorfields or at Kennington Common. To the eager multitude he brought a message of divine comfort : ' I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.' When the service was over the poor people were ready to tread him underfoot ' out of pure love and kindness.' It was some time before he could get out of the press. When he reached his inn he found that several of his hearers had outrun him. They vehemently importuned him to stay in Newcastle at least a few days, or even one day more, but he had to tear himself away because he had given his word to the Birstall people that he would be with them on the Tuesday night.

We note that some of Wesley's hearers at Newcastle were members of a Religious Society which had been in existence for many years. It had always gone on in ' a prudent, regular manner, and been well spoken of by all men.' They told him that they had a fine library, and that the steward read to the members a sermon every Sunday. Wesley listened with interest, and, knowing the besetting weakness of such Societies, says, as with a sigh, ' And yet how many of the publicans and harlots will go into the kingdom of heaven before these ! '

Wesley's brief visit opened his eyes to a great opportunity, and during his journey to the south he must have heard voices calling him back to Newcastle. In the town itself the effect

produced by his visit was marked. Christopher Hopper, who subsequently became a Methodist and a lay preacher, tells us that the people heard Wesley with astonishment. The open-air service was a new thing, and made a huge noise. He says, 'The populace entertained various conjectures about him; but few, if any, could tell the motive on which he came or the end he had in view. He made a short blaze, soon disappeared, and left us in great consternation.'[1] It was impossible that Wesley could be blind to the impression he had produced, or deaf to the entreaties of the people. An open door had been set before him, and we shall see that his conscience and his passion for the salvation of souls sent him again to Newcastle.

Making his way southward, Wesley pulled bridle at Birstall. He preached there several times and confirmed the good work that had been done. At the invitation of Mrs. Holmes, of Smith House, Lightcliffe, near Halifax, he visited her and preached there. Her husband had been strongly influenced by the teaching prevalent in the Ingham Societies, but she was untouched by it. In Wesley's *Journal* there is a valuable note bearing on this division of opinion. A Methodist Society was formed at Smith House, and the editor affirms that from the work rooted there the Methodism of the neighbourhood arose.[2] Lightcliffe and Halifax are intimately associated with the work of Oliver Heywood, the Nonconformist 'Apostle of the North,' who during the Restoration period, like John Wesley's grandfather, endured fierce persecution under the Act of Uniformity and the Conventicle Act. Those who are familiar with the story of those bitter days will remember that Heywood was twice publicly excommunicated in Halifax Parish Church.[3] They will look with special interest on the entry in Wesley's *Journal* which shows that, after preaching at Smith House, he rode to Halifax and called on Dr. Leigh, 'a candid inquirer after truth.' He held the living of Halifax for forty-five years, was a Prebendary of York, and is described by the historian of Halifax as 'a Low Churchman, popular with the Dissenters, and generous to the poor.' After his

[1] *Early Methodist Preachers*, i., 185.

[2] See *Journal*, iii., 16 *note*; also *W.H.S. Proceedings*, vii., 169–173.

[3] For Oliver Heywood's work in the neighbourhood of Halifax see an article in the *London Quarterly Review*, January, 1889. Those who visit the beautiful Parish Church of Halifax in the present day will note a monument placed there in honour of Oliver Heywood.

interview with Dr. Leigh, Wesley preached near Dewsbury Moor. Among his numerous hearers was John Bennet, whom we shall see more clearly at a later stage. At Mirfield and Adwalton he also preached during this return visit to Birstall.

Much encouraged by his experiences in Newcastle and Yorkshire Wesley resumed his journey. It was many years since he was in Epworth, and he decided to visit the old home. Reaching the place, he went to an inn, not knowing whether there were any left in the town who would not be ashamed of his acquaintance, but an old servant of his father's, with two or three poor women, found him out. He had a close talk with the old servant, and to his delight discovered that she knew she was, by the grace of God, saved through faith, and that her sins were forgiven. She told him that many in Epworth could bear the same witness. On Sunday, June 6, a little before the service in the church began, he waited on Mr. Romley, the curate, and offered to assist him either by preaching or reading prayers, but his offer was declined. Romley had been Samuel Wesley's curate, and had rendered him assistance as an amanuensis when he was preparing his *Dissertations on the Book of Job*. The people, who were expecting to hear the voice of John Wesley once more in the old church, were disappointed, a rumour having been spread in the town that he was to preach. The church in the afternoon was crowded, but the congregation had to listen to a ' florid ' discourse by the curate, in which the character of ' an enthusiast ' was depicted, and warnings were uttered against ' quenching the Spirit.' After the service John Taylor stood in the churchyard and gave notice, as the people were coming out, that ' Mr. Wesley, not being permitted to preach in the church, designs to preach here at six o'clock.' When that hour came a great congregation had assembled. The preacher stood on his father's tombstone near the east end of the church, and cried, ' The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' The scene has become memorable. It has been represented by painter and sculptor. The Epworth curate little thought that, in a more enlightened and Christian age, it would appear on a monument in Westminster Abbey.

John Wesley was wishful to hasten on his journey, but the villages near Epworth strongly claimed his attention. Two

men, who had been influenced by the teachers of the doctrine of ' stillness,' had been busy and successful among the villagers. In express terms they had told the people, ' All the ordinances are man's inventions, and if you go to church or sacrament you will be damned.' Wesley says that ' many hereupon wholly forsook the Church, and others knew not what to do.' On hearing these ill-tidings he determined to spend some days in the neighbourhood in order that he might have time to preach in each town and ' speak severally with those in every place who had found or waited for salvation.' He carried out his intention, and in the evenings at eight o'clock, during a week, he stood on his father's tombstone and proclaimed the gospel to attentive congregations.

On Sunday, June 13, Wesley preached in the Epworth churchyard to a vast multitude gathered from all parts. He says, ' I continued among them for near three hours, and yet we scarce knew how to part. Oh, let none think his labour of love is lost because the fruit does not immediately appear! Near forty years did my father labour here, but he saw little fruit of all his labour. I took some pains among this people too, and my strength also seemed spent in vain, but now the fruit appeared. There were scarce any in the town on whom either my father or I had taken any pains formerly, but the seed sown so long since now sprung up, bringing forth repentance and remission of sins.'

Encouraged by his visit, he travelled on towards Donington Park. On the way he preached at Sheffield, and also at Barley Hall, about eight miles from that town, which became a famous Methodist centre. In Sheffield he met his old companion, David Taylor, who had been with him during his visit to Leicestershire. They conversed together, and Wesley learned a lesson he often emphasizes. David Taylor, as we have seen, was a lay preacher. He occasionally exhorted multitudes of people in various parts ; ' but,' says Wesley, ' after that he had taken no thought about them, so that the greater part had fallen asleep again.' Wesley was convinced that mere preaching left little permanent result in those who only listened to it. His interview with Taylor strengthened his determination to form Societies in all the places where he preached, and to gather into them ' the wayside hearers ' who were apt to perish through lack of Christian fellowship.

After preaching at Ripley, in Derbyshire, Wesley hastened to Donington Park, which he reached on June 18. He found that Miss Cowper had passed away about three weeks before. He stayed for a few days with Lady Huntingdon. He was a welcome visitor. The writer of the *Life of the Countess of Huntingdon* gives us a little sketch of Wesley which enables us to see him as he was at this period. He says :

> At this period Mr. Wesley's visits to Donington Park were very frequent, Lady Huntingdon having a very sincere esteem for him, and they were much united in sentiments of a theological nature. Easy and affable in his demeanour, he accommodated himself to every society, and showed how happily the most finished courtesy may be blended with the most perfect piety. In his conversation we might be at a loss which to admire most—his fine classical taste, his extensive knowledge of men and things, or his overflowing goodness of heart. While the grave and serious were charmed with his wisdom, his sportive sallies of innocent mirth delighted even the young and thoughtless, and both saw, in his uninterrupted cheerfulness, the excellency of true religion.[1]

It is well to study this bit of real portraiture ; it enables us to see Wesley as he was, and to get rid of the grotesque caricatures which even now profess to represent him.

[1] i., 58.

VI

A NEW CENTRE IN THE NORTH

John Wesley left Donington Park on June 22, 1742, and made his way to Coventry, where he rested for the night. He resumed his journey to Bristol, preaching at Evesham, Painswick, Stroud, and other places. We note that he spent much time in 'settling disputes' in the small Societies he visited, and when he reached Bristol on June 28 the same necessary but dreary work awaited him. He went to Wales to see Mrs. Jones, of Fonmon Castle, whose husband had passed away 'in the strength of his years.' Returning to Bristol, he enjoyed a week of peace, 'all disputes being laid aside.' He needed this interval of quietness, for a sore trial awaited him.

When Wesley acquired the lease of the Foundery he also bought two small houses adjoining that building. For nearly three years his mother had resided in one of them. We have occasionally caught sight of her during that time, and have seen how fully she sympathized with the work of her sons, and how wisely she counselled them. After her troubled life she had found a harbour of refuge. The serenity of her closing days was deepened by her communion with the members of the Society, and by her opportunities of listening to preaching in harmony with her convictions. The visits of her friend Lady Huntingdon brightened many an hour, and the occasional presence of her sons relieved the weariness of a waning life. Some of her daughters were able to cheer her by their companionship; and, to the end, she comforted them in the midst of the misfortunes that seemed their inevitable lot. She had seen many years; in some of them she had keenly suffered, in others the days had been neither clear nor dark, but at eventide there was light. She had been the brightness of the Annesley home, the patient mother in the Epworth Rectory, and now we must enter the Foundery and watch with deep reverence 'the passing' of her gracious spirit.

When John Wesley, hastening from Bristol, arrived at the

Foundery on July 20, he found his mother on the borders of eternity. He talked with her. She had no doubt or fear; her only desire was 'to depart and be with Christ' as soon as God should call. She lingered until Friday, July 30. About three o'clock in the afternoon John Wesley went to her bedside and found her change was near. Her look was calm and serene, and her eyes were fixed upward while the Commendatory prayer was read. Wesley says, 'From three to four the silver cord was loosing and the wheel breaking at the cistern; and then, without any struggle, or sigh, or groan, the soul was set at liberty. We stood round the bed and fulfilled her last request, uttered a little before she lost her speech: "Children, as soon as I am released sing a psalm of praise to God."' Her daughters Emilia, Susanna, Mehetabel, Anne, and Martha joined John Wesley in singing that triumphant song. Each name stirs slumbering memories in the mind of the man who knows the history of the singers. Charles Wesley was not there, but the song he sang in his solitude is still heard in the assemblies of Christian people who gather together to celebrate the sacrament; who bless God's holy Name for all His servants departed this life in His faith and fear, and beseech Him to give them grace so to follow their good examples that with them they may be partakers of His heavenly Kingdom. In those moments of quiet communion we still ask the question, 'What are these arrayed in white?' We answer it more confidently because of Charles Wesley's hymn. They are those who have come out of great tribulation, who hunger no more, neither thirst any more; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne is their shepherd, and guides them unto fountains of waters of life; and God wipes away every tear from their eyes.

On Sunday, August 1, an almost innumerable company gathered together, at five o'clock in the afternoon, in the Bunhill Fields burying-ground. In that Nonconformist *campo santo* at her own request Mrs. Wesley's sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Dunton, had been buried, in the summer of 1697. We can imagine that Susanna Wesley frequently visited her sister's grave, and can understand the reason of the choice that was made of her own resting-place. The immense multitude parted asunder to allow the funeral procession from the Foundery to make its way, and then John Wesley committed to the earth the body of his mother 'to sleep with her fathers.'

When he read the words of committal he slightly altered them. A great hush fell on the people as he said, ' Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God, of His great mercy, to take unto Himself the soul of our dear mother ' ; then the sympathy of the crowd was expressed in tears and lamentations. They lingered when the ceremony was concluded, and John Wesley, with a wonderful self-command, preached to them. Their awe deepened as he spoke from the words, ' And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened ; and another book was opened, which is the book of life ; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.' The preacher was profoundly impressed by the quietness of the people. He says, ' It was one of the most solemn assemblies I ever saw, or expect to see on this side eternity.' Then the service closed, and the crowd dispersed.

It is difficult for those who are familiar with Bunhill Fields to re-create the scenes of that day of solemn silences. As we walk along the central pathway, or turn aside to wander among the graves, the roar of the City Road disturbs us. But sometimes we are able to forget the present. We efface modern changes ; we reduce the City Road to a country lane ; we watch the meadow-lands that spread to Islington. Then the stillness of that far-off day returns, and the earth is silent before the Lord. We reflect on John Wesley's experiences. We think of him in June, standing on his father's tombstone and preaching to the people who crowd the graveyard at Epworth. Then, in the light of August, we picture him in the midst of the innumerable multitude gathered around his mother's open grave. In each place he is about his Master's business. In spite of saddening memories and the stroke of recent bereavement he works on, ready to make any sacrifice of his own personal feeling if by so doing he may save some from death eternal. And so it was to the end. The end ! When John Wesley left Bunhill Fields after his mother's funeral, did he look across the road to the Tenter Ground ? If he did he would see only a great field. An impenetrable veil hid the future. But, in our musings among the tombs, we

have often lifted our eyes and fixed them on the house where he himself passed away in the light of the beatific vision. The devout man who searches for the golden links of the chain with which God binds the incidents of life together, will find some of them if he will spend an hour in Bunhill Fields thinking of the summer evening when Wesley preached there by the side of his mother's grave.

John Wesley walked through the shadowed valley and passed into the light of common day. He returned to Bristol on August 19, met his brother there, and also Charles Caspar Graves. Mr. Graves had been a student of St. Mary Magdalen College, Oxford. In 1738 he found peace with God. He became a zealous open-air preacher, and frequented the meetings and preaching-services of the Methodists. Applying to the Fellows of his college for a testimonial at the close of 1740, they made it a condition that, before they granted it, he should sign a document renouncing the principles and practices of the Methodists. He signed it. Its contents were as follows :

I, Charles Caspar Graves, do hereby declare that I do renounce the modern practice and principles of the persons commonly called Methodists, namely, of preaching in fields, of assembling together and expounding the Holy Scriptures in private houses and elsewhere than in churches in an irregular and disorderly manner, and their pretensions to an extraordinary and inward feeling of the Holy Spirit.

I do further declare my conformity to the Liturgy of the Church of England, and my unfeigned assent and consent to the Articles thereof commonly called the Thirty-nine Articles.

Lastly, I do declare that I am heartily sorry that I have given offence and scandal by frequenting the meetings and attending the expositions of the persons commonly called Methodists ; and that I will not frequent their meetings nor attend their expositions for the future, nor take upon me to preach and expound the Scriptures in the manner practised by them.

When John Wesley met Mr. Graves he found him ' much perturbed in spirit, and sincerely repentant for his wicked compliance with those oppressive men who, without any colour of law, divine or human, imposed such a condition of receiving a testimonial on him.' As the result of a conversation with the Wesleys he wrote a letter to the Fellows of Magdalen in which he expressed his repentance and withdrew

his former declaration. He also specifically declared that he knew no principles of the Methodists which were contrary to the Word of God nor any of their practices that were not agreeable both to Scripture and to the laws of the Church of England. In particular he stated his belief that their preaching the gospel in the fields, or in private houses, or 'in any part of His dominion who filleth heaven and earth,' could never be proved to be contrary to any written law either of God or man. He further declared that he was not apprised of their preaching anywhere in an irregular, disorderly manner; neither of their pretending to any extraordinary inspiration or extraordinary feelings of the Holy Spirit, but to those ordinary ones only, 'which, if a man have not, he is "without hope and without God in the world."' In this recantation it is not difficult to discern the effect of the conversation with the Wesleys. By their assistance a load was lifted from his conscience. The whole incident casts a revealing light on the condition of opinion concerning the Methodists. Subsequent events showed that the Magdalen views and methods were not confined to that college.

Mr. Graves, having retraced the false step he had taken, made good use of his liberty. He joined Charles Wesley in his evangelizing tour in the north of England, and endured with him the rigours of the campaign. In October they went together to Newcastle-on-Tyne, staying there for some weeks, preaching and gathering the people into a Society, and visiting the villages in the neighbourhood. There is an unfortunate gap in Charles Wesley's printed *Journal* at this particular period, but in Christopher Hopper's biography, in *The Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*, we are able to get a glimpse of him preaching at Tanfield Cross. Hopper says, 'I ran with the multitude to hear this strange preacher; when I saw a man in a clergyman's habit, preaching at a public cross to a large auditory, some gaping, some laughing, and some weeping, I wondered what this could mean. When he had concluded, some said, "He is a good man, and is sent to reform our land"; others said, "Nay, he is come to pervert and deceive us, and we ought to stone him out of our coasts." I said, "If he is a good man, good will be done, and it is plain we want a reformation; but if he is an impostor he can only leave us as he found us—that is, without hope and without God in the world." I

cannot tell what induced me to go so far, but I found I was in danger of being called a Methodist, and was glad to dismiss the conversation with a smile and a piece of drollery.' It was not long before Christopher Hopper entered into the experience of personal salvation, and proved himself worthy of a name he once dreaded.

After their mission in Newcastle Charles Wesley and Mr. Graves travelled towards the Midlands. Among other places they visited Wednesbury, in Staffordshire. It was then a small town inhabited by miners, by people engaged in other industries, and by tillers of the soil. Its aspect when Charles Wesley visited it in 1742 must not be judged by its present appearance. In an article in the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* the Rev. Samuel Lees sketched its condition in the eighteenth century. At that time the town had no engine, no engine-stack, and was fairly free from smoke. The era of 'the Black Country' was commencing, but its advance was slow. Round about the town were green fields. Towards the south spread West Bromwich Heath, a tract of furzy land, 'breezy and rabbit-abounding'; northward stood Walsall, not far from the heathered heights of Cannock Chase. About half a mile from Wednesbury there was a large hollow in the ground capable of containing four or five thousand people. In after years it was filled up, but it is still possible to detect its site. It is memorable as the place where Charles Wesley preached when he first visited the town. We must keep our eyes on Wednesbury, for it was destined to become a distinguished centre of Methodist work.[1]

Leaving Charles Wesley and his companion to wend their way through the Midlands, we will return to Newcastle. John Wesley arrived there on Saturday, November 13, and stayed until the end of the year. His brother's visit had been fruitful in results, and a Society had been formed which needed the regulating touch of John Wesley's master hand. The Society soon became one of the most prominent in England, and the processes of its organization demand careful attention.

In the evening of the day of his arrival in Newcastle John Wesley met 'the wild, staring, loving Society.' He had designed to meet the members alone, but strangers crowded

[1] See *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iv., 153–159. At the end of Mr. Lees' article is a list of important articles in the *Methodist Recorder* dealing with Black Country Methodism, written by Mr. G. T. Lawley, Mr. J. G. Wright, Mr. W. C. Sheldon, and others.

into the room and could not be persuaded to leave. An hour was spent in prayer, and then the assembly was dismissed. On Sunday, at five o'clock, John Wesley began preaching. Such an early morning service was a strange thing in the experience of the Newcastle people, and the abnormal hour must have tested their enthusiasm. Those who attended were richly rewarded. The victorious sweetness of the grace of God was present as Wesley discoursed on his Master's words, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' At ten o'clock he went to All Saints' Church, and was accompanied by many of his people. He says that there were such a number of communicants as he had scarce seen but at Bristol or London. Encouraged by this wonderful spectacle he defied rain and hail and went out in the afternoon and preached in the square of the Keelmen's Hospital on 'By grace are ye saved by faith.' The Keelmen's Hospital stood a little above Sandgate, and its large square, which was surrounded by the dwellings of the keelmen, gave standing-room to several thousands of persons. The rain and hail almost ceased during the sermon, and only a few careless hearers were 'frighted away.' Wesley must have called to mind the May day when he and John Taylor sang together the hundredth psalm to three or four people in Sandgate. At six o'clock he met the Society, and exhorted all who had 'set their hand to the plough' not to 'look back.'

The meetings of the Newcastle Society were held in a hired 'Room' situated in a narrow lane now called Lisle Street. The 'Room' was then known as 'The Tabernacle,' and had been built by a Mr. Macdonald, who had removed to Manchester. The Methodist Society, during these early visits of the Wesleys, had rapidly increased until it numbered upwards of eight hundred members. John Wesley watched the progress of the work with his usual caution. He says, 'The grace of God flows here with a wider stream than it did at first, either at Bristol or Kingswood. But it does not sink so deep as it did there. Few are thoroughly convinced of sin, and scarce any can witness that the Lamb of God has taken away their sins.' He expressly says that it was on Friday, November 19, he found 'the first witness of this good confession.' He saw that the members required much instruction, and close, individual attention. He set up early morning services, began to expound

the Acts of the Apostles, and devoted much time to conversation with the members, speaking to them ' severally.' In addition, after the week-evening sermon on Tuesday, November 16, he met the Society, and ' reproved some among them who walked disorderly, and earnestly besought them all to beware, lest, by reason of their sins, the way of truth should be evil spoken of.' These judicious methods had an immediate effect. In a few days there is a brighter record. In his *Journal* he writes: ' I never saw a work of God in any other place so evenly and gradually carried on. It continually rises step by step. Not so much seems to be done at any one time as hath frequently been at Bristol or London, but something at every time. It is the same with particular souls. I saw none in that triumph of faith which has been so common in other places. But the believers go on calm and steady. Let God do as seemeth Him good.' Encouraged by this manifest progress, he continued his work, not only in the Society but also in the towns, villages, and some of the lone houses within ten or twelve miles of Newcastle, slowly gathering a great number of persons who were united together to help each other to work out their salvation. His success was hindered by the occurrence of ' scenes ' similar to those which had produced disturbance in London, Bristol, and Kingswood ; but the mischief wrought by ' cries ' and ' prostrations ' was transitory, and the work advanced. John Wesley saw that a new and exceptionally strong Methodist centre was being created in the north of England.

The rapid growth of the Society, and other considerations, suggested it was necessary that a more suitable place than ' the Tabernacle ' should be erected for the accommodation of the crowds that assembled to hear the preaching of the new evangelists. The people strongly urged Wesley ' to arise and build ' ; but it was difficult to obtain land, and the expense of erecting a new large room was formidable. In London, Bristol, and Kingswood he was personally responsible for heavy expenditures, and he could not ignore the increasing weight of his financial burden. In a conversation with Henry Moore in after years he said that when he made up his mind to build a preaching house at Newcastle he had only twenty-six shillings in his possession.[1] It was computed that such a

[1] Moore's *Life of Wesley*, i., 550.

house as was proposed could not be finished under seven hundred pounds, and many discouraged him from undertaking the task. However, he made up his mind to begin, 'nothing doubting but, as it was begun for God's sake, He would provide what was needful for the finishing it.' The difficulty of obtaining a site detained him in Newcastle longer than he had intended to stay. At last, on Saturday, December 4, a gentleman, Mr. Riddell, called and offered to sell him a piece of ground outside the Pilgrim Street Gate. On Monday a document was prepared wherein Mr. Riddell agreed to put him in possession of the site on the following Thursday on payment of thirty pounds. On Tuesday, December 7, Wesley was so ill in the morning that he was obliged to send a substitute, Mr. Williams, to the room. Mr. Williams afterwards waited on Mr. Stephenson, a merchant in the town, who had a passage through Mr. Riddell's ground. He informed Mr. Stephenson that Wesley was willing to purchase it. He immediately replied, 'Sir, I do not want money, but if Mr. Wesley wants ground he may have a piece of my garden adjoining to the place you mention. I am at a word. For forty pounds he shall have sixteen yards in breadth and thirty in length.' The next day Wesley accepted Mr. Stephenson's offer and took possession.[1] As he could not fairly go back from his agreement with Mr. Riddell he entered on his ground at the same time. His two purchases gave him a site of about forty yards in length, in the middle of which he determined to build the house, leaving room for a small courtyard in front and a little garden behind it. It was his intention to construct the house, not only for preaching purposes, but also for the accommodation of orphan children, the recollection of Professor Francke's work at Halle being strong upon him. He was never able to realize that part of his design, but the room, when erected, was commonly called or known by the name of 'The Orphan House,' and the trust deed provided for the carrying on of a school consisting of one master and mistress and forty poor children.

The influence of Francke may be detected in another particular. We have seen that Wesley lacked the funds necessary to erect the Orphan House, but we gather from his conversation

[1] Mr. Stephenson was an ancestor of Sir William H. Stephenson, for so many years one of the strong pillars of Methodism in the north of England.

with Henry Moore that he determined, like Francke, to cast his burden on the Lord and to trust Him to move the hearts of the people to send him the supplies of money he needed. It was not long before his faith was honoured. He received the following letter from a Quaker who had heard of the work in Newcastle: 'Friend Wesley, I have had a dream concerning thee. I thought I saw thee surrounded with a large flock of sheep which thou didst not know what to do with. My first thought after I awoke was that it was thy flock at Newcastle, and that thou hadst no house of worship for them. I have enclosed a note for one hundred pounds, which may help thee to provide a house.' This was one of many instances in which Wesley received encouragement and help from members of the Society of Friends. In some parts of the country they were among the first to perceive and appreciate the deep spiritual meaning of the doctrines he preached. In answer to prayer other sympathizers sent contributions, and the financial problem was gradually solved.[1]

Having secured the site for the Orphan House, Wesley removed to a lodging adjoining the ground. It was a hard winter, and the frost delayed the work of building. Wesley declares that never before had he felt such intense cold. Notwithstanding the harshness of the weather he went on with his work, preaching in the open air and testing the powers of endurance of the Northumbrian crowds that gathered around him. On Monday, December 20, the foundation of the new room was laid in the presence of a large assembly of interested spectators, none scoffing or interrupting. The commencement of the building was accompanied by circumstances that modified Wesley's joy. One of his companions from the south, Thomas Meyrick, a Cornishman, was seized with serious sickness, and the physician attending him gave up all hope of his recovery. But Wesley gathered together a few of his friends and cried to God for the life of his companion. In answer to prayer he rallied for a time, but on Christmas Day all hope of his recovery seemed vain. He lay 'as dead already.' Once more Wesley and his friends assembled in the sick-room and pleaded with God. Meyrick recovered consciousness, and from that hour increased in strength until he was perfectly restored. After recording the case Wesley says, 'I wait to

[1] Moore's *Life of Wesley*, i., 551.

hear who will either disprove this fact or philosophically account for it.' We are arrested by this picture of Wesley in the sick-room surrounded by men who joined him in calling on God with strong cries and tears. It reminds us of those innumerable moments of intercession he spent in Oxford and Georgia. He had perfected the practice of prayer. He accepted the words of his Master with a faith beautiful in its simplicity: 'All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them and ye shall have them.' His belief in the efficacy of prayer made him strong and cheerful in the midst of the perils and disappointments that marked the course of the great Revival.

On December 30 John Wesley left Newcastle and commenced his journey to the south. The year had brought him experiences of great importance. We are especially impressed with the fact that the United Societies had quickened their advance towards the position of a distinct religious organization. The creation of new centres in the Midlands and the north suggested a process of expansion which was prophetic of the time when the whole of England would become the scene of the Wesleys' evangelistic work. But, turning from the question of territorial expansion, another aspect of the advance that had been made arrests our attention. It is evident that Wesley was conscious of the fact that the Societies under his care differed not only from the Religious Societies but also from the Established and Dissenting Churches. He saw that they had a distinct individuality. That fact had been recognized by outsiders; it had excited their interest and aroused their criticism. The members of the United Societies were beginning to be popularly styled 'Methodists'; and, although Wesley objected to the name, his prejudices against it were slowly yielding. He frankly declared he would rejoice if the very name might never be mentioned more, but buried in eternal oblivion. The interment of a happy nickname is a difficult operation, and Wesley found it was better to use it, especially when he was engaged in public debate.[1] In 1742, wishing to illumine the minds of hostile critics and to answer the objections of bewildered inquirers, he determined to give the world a description of the Methodists. He wrote two

[1] To the end of his life Wesley entertained his prejudice against the name. As a compromise he adopted the form, 'The People called Methodists.'

pamphlets, one entitled *The Character of a Methodist*, the other *The Principles of a Methodist*. It is difficult to exaggerate their importance. They help us to understand Wesley's view of what the Methodists should be, and reveal the ideals by which he was influenced in the creation and government of his Societies. The idealism marking these pamphlets is revealed by the motto prefixed to *The Character of a Methodist*: 'Not as though I had already attained'—a modifying sentence he applied to himself and knew to be applicable to many of his people. The publication of the pamphlets, however, signifies, among other things, that he was aware that the United Societies had emerged from the condition of private associations, had begun to assume a distinct position, and were bound to give some public account of themselves.

It will serve our purpose if we concentrate our attention on *The Character of a Methodist*. In a letter to *Lloyd's Evening Post*, written in 1767, Wesley explained the origin of the pamphlet as a composition. When he was a young man, with a mind keenly interested in religion, he had been much impressed with the description of the 'Character of a Christian' sketched by Clement of Alexandria. For ten years that description influenced his mind. After considering the matter he thought it would be useful if he drew up such a 'character' himself, in what he deemed to be a more Scriptural manner, and mostly in the very words of Scripture. He went back to the primitive Church and the New Testament for the materials of his sketch. The whole trend of his studies at Oxford and in Georgia had led him to seek for the ideal Christian in the Apostolic Age and in the primitive Church. The light of far-off days shone around him as he wrote his pamphlet. But the light of the days in which he lived also guided him, and the experiences through which he had passed instructed him. As we look at his picture we see the deep background, but we also watch the figures in the foreground. They are not visionary personages of times vanished and forgotten; they are the men and women of Wesley's own day, compassed with infirmity, hard pressed by temptation, but confident of the victory that comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Character of a Methodist, the first edition of which was published in 1742, should be studied by those who wish to understand John Wesley's ideals. He pursued them to the

close of his life ; and, to a remarkable extent, he realized them. It is only necessary at this stage to indicate the main points of his pamphlet. It is noticeable that, while disclaiming any desire ' to be at the head of any sect or party,' he was conscious that circumstances had led him into a special position among the Methodists. He tells us that he was one of the first to whom the name of ' Methodist ' was given ; and he also says he was aware that it was generally supposed that the Methodists were ' directed ' by him. Accepting the popular report without demur, he claims that his position enabled him to give a clear account of the principles and practice of the people with whom he was so closely associated. Using his advantages, he proceeds to describe the Methodists. In the first place he seeks to remove false impressions of their character. He declares that the distinguishing marks of a Methodist are not his ' opinions ' of any sort ; nor his words or phrases, his actions, customs, or usages in matters purely indifferent and undetermined by the Word of God ; neither is he distinguished by laying the whole stress of religion on any single part of it. We are specially interested in what he says about ' opinions ' because his statements on that subject roused strong opposition at the outset of his evangelizing career. It is necessary to quote his words and to understand them. He says : ' The distinguishing marks of a Methodist are not his opinions of any sort. His assenting to this or that scheme of religion, his embracing any particular set of notions, his espousing the judgement of one man or another, are all quite wide of the point. Whosoever, therefore, imagines that a Methodist is a man of such or such an opinion is grossly ignorant of the whole affair ; he mistakes the truth totally. We believe, indeed, that all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God ; and herein we are distinguished from Jews, Turks, and Infidels. We believe the written Word of God to be the only and sufficient rule both of Christian faith and practice, and herein we are fundamentally distinguished from those of the Romish Church. We believe Christ to be the eternal supreme God ; and herein we are distinguished from the Socinians and Arians. But as to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think. So that, whatsoever they are, whether right or wrong, they are no distinguishing marks of a Methodist.' In reading this

declaration it is necessary to give their proper value to the words 'distinguishing,' 'believe,' and 'opinions'; if we do so we shall wonder at the outcry which was raised against Wesley's broad-minded statement.

In Wesley's day it was popularly supposed that a Methodist could be recognized by his sanctimonious speech, and that in this particular he revived the custom of the more rigid Puritans. There may have been some ground for the supposition, but such manner of speech was impossible to Wesley; it never received any countenance from his teaching and example. As to 'words and phrases,' he declares that the Methodists neither willingly nor designedly deviated from the most usual way of speaking, save when they expressed Scripture truths in Scripture words; and he presumes that no Christian would condemn them for using such quotations. Dealing with actions, customs, or usages of an indifferent nature, he affirms that the religion of the Methodists does not lie in doing what God has not enjoined, or abstaining from what He has not forbidden. His reply to those who asserted that a Methodist was distinguished by laying the whole stress of religion on a single part of it is: 'If you say "Yes, he is; for he thinks we are saved by faith alone," I answer, "You do not understand the terms. By salvation he means holiness of heart and life. And this he affirms to spring from true faith alone. Can even a nominal Christian deny it? Is this placing a part of religion for the whole? Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid! Yea, we establish the law." We do not place the whole of religion (as too many do, God knoweth) either in doing no harm, or in doing good, or in using the ordinances of God. No, not in all of them together; wherein we know by experience a man may labour many years, and at the end have no religion at all, no more than he had at the beginning. Much less in any one of these; or, it may be, in a scrap of one of them; like her who fancies herself a virtuous woman only because she is not a prostitute; or him who dreams he is an honest man merely because he does not rob or steal. May the Lord God of my fathers preserve me from such a poor, starved religion as this! Were this the mark of a Methodist, I would sooner choose to be a sincere Jew, Turk, or pagan.'

Turning from the negative to the positive aspect of his subject Wesley answers the question, 'What, then, is the

mark?' His reply is full and explicit. A Methodist, he says, is one who has 'the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him,' one who 'loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength.' God is the joy of his heart and the desire of his soul, which is constantly crying out, 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee! My God and my all! Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever!' He then amplifies his definition by depicting the results of the shedding abroad of the love of God in the heart, and draws a portrait of a Methodist which attracts us by its beauty. He represents him as rejoicing evermore, as sustained by a hope 'full of immortality,' as in everything giving thanks, as praying without ceasing. Wesley, by his own example, was one of the greatest exponents of the practice of constant prayer, and it is well to record his words on this point. Speaking of the Methodist he says, 'It is given him "always to pray, and not to faint." Not that he is always in the house of prayer; though he neglects no opportunity of being there. Neither is he always on his knees, although he often is, or on his face, before the Lord his God. Nor yet is he always crying aloud to God, or calling upon Him in words. For many times "the Spirit maketh intercession for him with groans that cannot be uttered." But at all times the language of his heart is this: "Thou brightness of the eternal glory, unto Thee is my heart, though without a voice; and my silence speaketh unto Thee." And this is true prayer, and this alone. But his heart is ever lifted up to God at all times and in all places. In this he is never hindered, much less interrupted, by any person or thing. In retirement or company, in leisure, business, or conversation, his heart is ever with the Lord. Whether he lie down or rise up, God is in all his thoughts; he walks with God continually, having the loving eye of his mind still fixed upon Him, and "everywhere seeing Him that is invisible."'

In dealing with the question 'Who is a Methodist according to your own account?' Wesley yields absolute obedience to the command, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' He shows that the love of God is the originating cause of a Methodist's love of his fellow men. Because he loves God the one desire of his life is 'not to do his own will, but the will of Him

that sent him ' ; because he loves Him he keeps His commandments ; ' not only some or most of them, but all, from the least to the greatest. . . . Whatever God has forbidden he avoids ; whatever God hath enjoined he doeth ; and that whether it be little or great, hard or easy, joyous or grievous to the flesh.' Loving God with all his heart, he serves Him with all his strength. One manifestation of his love of God is the service of his neighbour. He serves by the example he sets and by the positive acts of kindness he performs. He does all to the glory of God. In his employments, and when ' he diverts himself from too wasting labour,' he seeks to advance the glory of God by peace and goodwill among men. His one invariable rule is, ' Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus.' He abstains from many things which are in accordance with the customs of the world. He knows that vice does not lose its nature, though it becomes ever so fashionable ; and remembers that ' every man is to give an account of himself to God.' He cannot, therefore, ' follow ' even ' a multitude to do evil.' He cannot ' fare sumptuously every day,' or ' make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' He cannot ' lay up treasures upon earth ' any more than he can take fire into his bosom. He cannot ' adorn himself ' on any pretence ' with gold or costly apparel.' He cannot join in or countenance any diversion which has the least tendency to vice of any kind. He cannot ' speak evil ' of his neighbour any more than he can lie either for God or man. ' He cannot utter an unkind word of any one ; for love keeps the door of his lips. He cannot speak " idle words " ; " no corrupt communication " ever " comes out of his mouth," as is all " which is " not " good to the use of edifying," not " fit to minister grace to the hearers." But " whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are " justly " of good report," he thinks, and speaks, and acts, " adorning the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in all things." '

Wesley closes his description of the Methodist with these words : ' As he has time he " does good unto all men " ; unto neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies, and that in every possible kind ; not only to their bodies, by " feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those who are sick or in prison " ; but much more does he labour to do good to their

souls, as of the ability which God giveth ; to awaken those that sleep in death ; to bring those who are awakened to the atoning blood, that, " being justified by faith, they may have peace with God " ; and to provoke those who have peace with God to abound more in love and good works. And he is willing to " spend and be spent therein," even " to be offered up on the sacrifice and service of their faith," so they may " all come unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." '

When reading his account of ' the principles and practices of our sect,' Wesley anticipated that some man would say, ' Why, these are only the common, fundamental principles of Christianity.' ' This is the very truth,' he replies ; ' I know they are no other ; and I would to God both thou and all men knew that I, and all that follow my judgement, do vehemently refuse to be distinguished from other men by any but the common principles of Christianity—the plain, old Christianity that I teach, renouncing and detesting all other marks of distinction. . . . By these fruits of a living faith do we labour to distinguish ourselves from the unbelieving world, from all those whose minds or lives are not according to the gospel of Christ. But from real Christians, of whatsoever denomination they be, we earnestly desire not to be distinguished at all ; nor from any who sincerely follow after what they know they have not yet attained. . . . Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thine ? I ask no further question. If it be, give me thy hand. For opinions, or terms, let us not destroy the work of God. Dost thou love and serve God ? It is enough. I give thee the right hand of fellowship.' [1]

[1] *Works*, viii., 340–347, 8vo ed.

VII

THE RULES OF THE UNITED SOCIETIES

THE year 1743 opened somewhat inauspiciously for John Wesley. On January 1 he was once more in Epworth ; and, on the following day, he preached again on his father's tombstone. He hoped to receive the sacrament in the church, but Romley, the curate, refused to admit him to the Lord's Table. He felt his repulsion keenly. The next day he rode to Birstall, saw John Nelson, and received a melancholy account of some of the members of the Society who had formerly ' run well.' His experiences in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire would have depressed another man, but once more his equable temper stood the test, and he steadily pursued his work. He turned his face to the south, and on Saturday, January 8, arrived at Wednesbury and preached in the Town Hall, which was filled from end to end. The next morning at five o'clock he preached there again ; and at eight o'clock, following the example of his brother, he spoke to a large congregation in ' the hollow.' In the afternoon he went to church and heard Mr. Edward Egginton, the vicar, who preached ' a plain and useful sermon.' The vicar spoke to him, invited him to his house, and told him the oftener he came the better. After the service the congregation streamed down to ' the hollow.' Wesley says that it could not contain them, but it was ' edged round ' with people who came from all parts. Twenty-nine persons were joined together in a Society, and the number was increased on Tuesday to about a hundred. He preached several times during his visit, and carried on the work Charles Wesley had commenced. His experiences in Wednesbury encouraged him. It seemed as if he had discovered another garden of the Lord, bright with blossom and the promise of fruit.

After visiting Bristol and London, John Wesley set out for Newcastle, reaching it on February 19. He had interested the London Methodists in his scheme for building the Orphan House, and had made a collection for it at the Foundery which

amounted to fifty pounds. During his journey northward he must have brooded over the condition of the Societies. He had spent much time in visiting the members at Kingswood and in London, talking with each 'severally.' The exacting character of this work may be judged from his entry in the *Journal* on February 2. On that day he and his brother began visiting the classes in London. They went together, and were employed every day during the week from six in the morning until nearly six in the evening. The work was done thoroughly. John Wesley had a lofty ideal of pastoral supervision. 'I cannot understand,' he says, 'how any minister can hope ever to give up his account with joy, unless, as Ignatius advises, he knows all his flock by name, not overlooking the men-servants and the maid-servants.'[1] As the Societies swiftly increased in number he must have found the advice of Ignatius 'a counsel of perfection,' but no one can glance over his laborious compilations of the names of members in the rolls of the principal Societies without perceiving that he ever pursued his ideal. His close contact with the members, his knowledge of their spiritual condition, his happy power of recognizing them not only by face but by name, gave him great influence over them. His fraternal spirit charmed them, and, in part, explains the steadfast loyalty and warm personal affection for him that distinguished and safeguarded 'the people called Methodists.'

As Wesley travelled to the north he must have been conscious of the weight of his increasing responsibilities. He never had any ambition to be the founder of a sect. Any temptation to vainglory as he thought of his successes as an evangelist was at once dismissed as he listened to the commands of duty, that 'stern daughter of the voice of God.' As he rode along, the term 'The United Societies' deepened in meaning. Not only in London, Bristol, Kingswood, and Newcastle, but in many parts of England and Wales, Societies were springing up claiming his constant care and direction. They were gradually taking up a distinct position among the various religious organizations of the country. The rulers and clergy of the Church of England had no desire to adopt them; their old connexion with the Religious Societies was broken; the breach with the Moravians had become permanent; the Welsh

[1] *Journal*, iii., 65.

Calvinistic Methodists had organized themselves into a separate community. Wesley must have felt that his Society had a distinct and, in some respects, a unique position, and that Providence had put into his hands the heavy task of guiding them according to the doctrines, the principles, and the counsels of the New Testament. We do not know when he clearly perceived the responsibilities of his success, but it is undoubted that when he visited Newcastle in February, 1743, he took a new step on a path that led to the unifying of the Methodist Societies throughout the world.

It is a singular fact that, up to the beginning of 1743, the 'United Societies' had no 'General Rules.' The Religious Societies formed by Dr. Horneck and Dr. Woodward were governed by definite 'rules,' which established a standard of membership, and contained clear directions concerning the conduct and the obligations of the Christian life. Those who persistently disobeyed the 'rules' were excluded from these Societies. The Religious Society meeting in Fetter Lane also had its 'rules.' They differed widely from those of the older Societies. Some of them were drawn up by Wesley; others were added to meet special circumstances.[1] When Wesley arrived in Newcastle he felt that the time had come to supply a deficiency which had in it a strong element of danger; so he set about the work with his customary caution and thoroughness. He visited the Society and 'diligently inquired who they were that did not walk according to the gospel.' His inquiries led him to put away above fifty persons. A few days after the record of this visitation we find an entry in his *Journal* showing the reasons why some of these members were excluded. Reckoning from December 30, 1742, the number expelled from the Society was sixty-four. The reasons for their exclusion were as follows: Two for cursing and swearing; two for habitual Sabbath-breaking; seventeen for drunkenness; two for retailing spirituous liquors; three for quarrelling and brawling; one for beating his wife; three for habitual, wilful lying; four for railing and evil speaking; one for idleness and laziness; and nine-and-twenty for lightness and carelessness. From this list we can see the evils which Wesley considered to be antagonistic to the gospel of Christ. He

[1] For the 'rules' of the older Societies and the Fetter Lane Society, see *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 10, 12, 196.

determined to raise up a barrier against them. He knew that God's written word was 'the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of faith and practice,' but he was convinced that the time had come when it was necessary to state explicitly what was involved in 'walking in accordance with the gospel.'

In the library of the Wesleyan Conference Office there is still preserved a little document of supreme importance. It contains 'the Rules of the Society' as first published. It is dated February 23, 1742–3, and it was printed by John Gooding, on the Side, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and sold at one penny. The date probably indicates the time when Wesley completed his manuscript; that is, during the week when he had to put away so many persons from the Society. He took care that the members should be acquainted with the work he was doing. On Sunday, March 6, he assembled the Society, and read the 'rules' which all members were to observe. He then asked every one to consider whether he was willing 'to conform thereto or no.' The next day he began visiting the classes once more, 'lest that which is lame should be turned out of the way.' Several of the members resented the introduction of the 'rules'; but the publicity he gave to them, and his explanations of their meaning, did much to secure their acceptance. They soon became well known and adopted throughout the whole of the United Societies.

The 'rules' as they appeared in the first edition were as follows:

THE NATURE, DESIGN, AND GENERAL RULES

OF THE

UNITED SOCIETIES,

IN

LONDON, BRISTOL, KING'S-WOOD, AND NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

1. In the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to me in *London*, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next day) that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come; which they saw

continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work, I appointed a day when they might all come together; which from thenceforward, they did every week, namely, on *Thursday*, in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number increased daily) I gave those advices, from time to time, which I judged most needful for them; and we always concluded our meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.

2. This was the rise of the *United Society*, first at *London*, and then in other places. Such a Society is no other than '*a company of men* having the form, and seeking the power, *of godliness*; *united, in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.*'

3. That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are indeed working out their own salvation, each Society is divided into smaller companies, called classes, according to their respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in every class, one of whom is styled *the Leader*. It is his business

I. To see each person in his class once a week, at the least, in order
To receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the poor;
To inquire how their souls prosper;
To advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require.

II. To meet the Minister and the Stewards of the Society once a week, in order
To pay in to the Stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding;
To show their account of what each person has contributed; and
To inform the Minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly, and will not be reproved.

4. There is one only condition previously required in those who desire admission into these Societies, *a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins.* But wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

First, by doing no harm; by avoiding evil in every kind; especially that which is most generally practised. Such is:

The taking the name of God in vain;

The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work thereon, or by buying or selling;

Drunkenness, *buying or selling spirituous liquors*; or *drinking them* (unless in cases of extreme necessity);

Fighting, quarrelling, brawling; *going to law*; returning evil for evil or railing for railing; the *using many words* in buying or selling;

The buying or selling uncustomed goods ;
The giving or taking things on usury ;
Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation ;
Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us ;
Doing what we know is not for the glory of God : as
The *putting on of gold, or costly apparel* ;
The *taking such diversions* as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus ;
The *singing* those *songs*, or *reading* those *books*, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God ;
Softness, and needless self-indulgence ;
Laying up treasures upon earth.

5. It is expected of all who continue in these Societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Secondly, By doing good ; by being, in every kind, merciful after their power ; as they have opportunity, doing good of every possible sort, and as far as possible, to all men :

To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick, or in prison :

To their souls, by instructing, *reproving*, or exhorting all we have any intercourse with ; trampling underfoot that enthusiastic doctrine of devils, that ' we are not to do good unless *our heart is free to it.*'

By doing good, especially, to them that are of the household of faith, or groaning so to be ; employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in business ; and that so much the more because the world will love its own, and them only.

By all possible *diligence and frugality*, that the gospel be not blamed.

By running with patience the race that is set before them ; *denying themselves* and taking up their cross daily ; submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of the world ; and that men should *say all manner of evil of them falsely, for their Lord's sake.*

6. It is expected of all who desire to continue in these Societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

Thirdly, By attending upon all the ordinances of God ; such are :
The public worship of God ;
The ministry of the word, either read or expounded ;
The supper of the Lord ;
Private prayer ;
Searching the Scriptures ; and fasting, or abstinence.

7. These are the General Rules of our Societies ; all which we are taught of God to observe, even in His written word ; the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice ; and all these we know His Spirit writes on every truly awakened heart. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any one of them, let it be made known unto him who watches over that soul,

as one that must give account. I will admonish him of the error of his ways. I will bear with him for a season. But if, then, he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our souls.

JOHN WESLEY.

FEBRUARY 23, 1742–3.[1]

When we examine the first edition of the 'rules' we find that they closely resemble those existing at the present time. For nearly two centuries they have borne the strain and stress of the everyday life of the Church, and have proved themselves invaluable in the maintenance of its discipline. In the course of time a few variations and additions have been made, and it will be of service to indicate them. In Section 3, which refers to the 'business' of a leader, the order has been rearranged. The most important alteration is in the rule that concerns the contributions in the classes. In 1743, and up to the time of John Wesley's death in 1791, the rules directed that the weekly contributions were to be applied 'toward the relief of the poor.' It was not until 1794 that the direction was altered, and the words 'towards the support of the gospel' were substituted. In Section 4 the statement concerning the 'one only' condition previously required in those who desire admission into the Societies has passed through an interesting experience; but it still stands as in the first edition, with the transposition of two words. The 'one only' condition has been severely criticized. It has been held to mean that 'a desire to flee from the wrath to come' is sufficient in itself to qualify a person for admission into the Methodist Society. When the accompanying words, 'to be saved from their sins,' are quoted, then the objection is made that there are two conditions, and not 'one only.' It has been suggested that Wesley's statement would have been improved if he had said that a man seeking admission into the Society must possess a desire to flee from the wrath to come, *and* to be saved from his sins. There can be little doubt that such was Wesley's meaning. We see what was in his mind when we examine the first edition of the *Plain Account of the People called Methodists*, written in 1748. In that tract Wesley, quoting

[1] In Appendix B of Dr. William W. Stamp's *Orphan House of Wesley* there is a copy of the first edition of the 'rules.' There are two verbal errors in it. The version we have given is that of the first edition, preserved in the Conference Office. The Didsbury College Library possesses a valuable collection of the various editions of the 'rules.' Twenty-two editions were published during Wesley's lifetime.

apparently from memory, introduces the word 'and' when stating the 'condition.'[1] After his death the evidences of hesitation on the part of editors of the 'rules' is apparent. In the 1808 edition the word 'and' is introduced, and also in five other subsequent editions.

In Section 4 the rule concerning 'going to law' as it stood in the first edition was soon altered. In its original form it forbids all actions at law. It was immediately changed to 'brother going to law with brother.' In 1764, 'on usury,' in the same section, was explained as 'unlawful interest,' and was thus brought into harmony with Wesley's statement, in his *Notes on the New Testament*, that 'interest does not appear to be contrary to any law of God or man. But this is no plea for usury; that is, the taking such interest as implies any degree of oppression or extortion.'[2] In 1744 the next rule concerning 'uncharitable or unprofitable conversation' was enlarged by the addition of the words 'especially speaking evil of ministers or those in authority.' In 1750 the word 'magistrates' was substituted for 'those in authority,' and the rule attained its present form. In 1764 a new rule was introduced into the fourth section. It forbade 'borrowing without a probability of paying, or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.' In the same year, in Section 6, 'family prayer' was included among 'the ordinances of God.' When Charles Wesley added his signature to the second edition of the 'rules,' in May, 1743, the necessary verbal changes in the closing section of the document were made. That section contains a declaration of supreme importance. Concerning the 'rules' Wesley affirms that all of them 'we are taught of God to observe, even in this written word; the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice.' The truth of his affirmation has not been successfully contested. He never moved from the position that the supreme authority in his Societies was the Bible, and that the validity of the 'rules' depended on their harmony with the spirit and precepts of the Word of God.[3]

As we closely study the 'rules' questions concerning their origin and the particular form which they assumed constantly

[1] Methodist *Tracts* in Didsbury College Library, vol. ii.

[2] See 'note' on Luke xix. 23. The *Notes* were published in 1755.

[3] Mr. Arthur Wallington has given valuable assistance in verifying the dates of the verbal changes in the 'rules.'

present themselves. Some of those questions we must now try to answer. If we compare them with *The Character of a Methodist* we find striking resemblance between the two documents. They were written almost at the same time and they follow similar lines. In writing the former Wesley was guided by the light of the two 'great commandments.' The obligation to love God and our neighbour dominates the whole tract. It determines its form and spirit. The lofty note sounded by Wesley in *The Character of a Methodist* pervades the 'rules.' In the latter we find only more elaborated expressions of the duties we owe to God and our fellow men. But when we have said so much we feel that we have not solved the problem that now demands our attention.

We will suggest another solution. It is certain that when Wesley drew up the 'rules' for the United Societies he did not adopt the 'orders' of the Religious Societies. He was undoubtedly influenced by them, but their 'atmosphere' differs altogether from that of the 'rules.' Did any book he had read assist him when he drew up his little code of laws? In answering this question it must be remembered that there were few men in the country at that time who were so intimately acquainted with the history of primitive Christianity as John Wesley. He was a specialist in the subject; he was enthusiastic in his admiration of 'the age of golden days.' When he was in the woodlands of Georgia he saw a vision of the return of the Church to its early simplicity, purity, and victorious onset against evil. At that time a book was in his hands that he studied with avidity. It was Cave's *Primitive Christianity: or, the Religion of the Antient Christians, in the first age of the Gospel.* When he was writing the 'rules' in Newcastle, it seems probable that the book was actually before him. If not, the memory of its contents was quick in his mind and guided his hand. In many of their particulars Cave's book and Wesley's 'rules' coincide; and we find it impossible to believe that the coincidences were undesigned.[1]

Cave tells us in his interesting 'Preface' that he was led to his inquiry into the ways in which the ancient Christians walked by the disappointment which came to him as an observer of the manners of so-called Christian men in his own

[1] Wesley published an abridged edition of Cave's book in 1753.

time. He uses strong language about them. He says, 'I had not been long an observer of the manners of men, but I found them generally so debauched and vicious, so corrupt and contrary to the rules of this holy religion, that if a modest and honest heathen was to estimate Christianity by the lives of its professors, he would certainly proscribe it as the vilest religion in the world.' Being offended at the spectacles presented to him in the lives of the nominal Christians who abounded in England towards the close of the seventeenth century, he made up his mind 'to stand in the ways and see, and inquire for the good old way.' He was deeply versed in Church history, and had come to the conclusion that he must search for 'the good old way' in the records of the first three or four centuries of the Christian era. 'Much lower,' he says, 'I did not intend to go, because the life and spirit of Christianity did then visibly decline apace; nothing as I went along whatever contributed to my satisfaction in this affair.' Passing across 'the dark ages' of the Church, he travelled towards the morning; and, to his delight, he discovered the people of his quest. He read widely, thought deeply, and found the men and women who were worthy of the name they bore, and who were the true descendants of those who were gathered out of the world into the Christian assemblies of New Testament and apostolic times. With keen sympathy he described their character, their worship, their manner of life, their martyr sufferings, their glorious witness for their Lord. His enthusiasm for primitive Christianity was not a crackling flame; it glowed at white heat, and to its steady light John Wesley came and kindled a torch which still burns.

In Wesley's time Dr. Cave's books on *The Lives of the Apostles*, *The Lives of the Fathers*, and on *Primitive Christianity* were 'standards.' We will concentrate our attention on the last-named volume. Wesley criticized it rather severely because it related 'every weak thing the ancient Christians ever said or did.' He considered that the author's garrulity showed defect of judgement, but the modern reader thinks otherwise. A picture of the early Church, with its defects left out, is of little use to us in our attempt to understand primitive Christianity.

Cave's *Primitive Christianity* is divided into three parts.

In the first, after dealing with the charges brought against the early Christians he turns to the positive parts of their religion. He dwells on their piety towards God, their churches and places of public worship, and their observance of the Lord's Day and the fasts and festivals of the ancient Church. He then informs us as to the persons constituting 'the body of the Church,' both people and ministers. He describes their usual worship, private and public, and gives details concerning the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper. His descriptions of the home-life of the early Christians are very attractive. We see and hear them as they read the Scriptures, observe their set hours for private and family prayer, say their 'graces' at meal-times, and sing their 'divine songs' as they go about their household ways. They found such singing, when they were at work, 'an excellent antidote against temptations.' The affinities between the first part of Cave's book and the sixth section of the 'rules' of the United Societies are easily discerned.

The second and third parts of *Primitive Christianity* are still more germane to our purpose. They deal with 'the religion of the primitive Christians as to those virtues that respect themselves,' and 'their religion as respecting other men.' If we take up the Methodist 'rules' and compare Sections 4 and 5 with the second and third parts of Cave's book, we shall find convincing proofs of the correctness of our conviction that Wesley was deeply influenced by *Primitive Christianity* when he drew up the 'rules' for the governance of his Societies.

In the second part of his book Cave, after speaking of the humility of the early Christians, and quoting Justin Martyr's counsels that they should shun all sinister suspicions of others, and abstain from anger and contentiousness, draws special attention to the unworldliness of the members of the early Church. That unworldliness was shown by their contentment with such things as they possessed, by their refraining from laying up treasure on earth, and by their abstinence from the sights and sports of the theatres. Dwelling on the last point, he affirms that the ancient Christians looked upon the public sports and pastimes of their day as the scenes not only of folly and lewdness but of great impiety and idolatry. Pursuing the topic of unworldliness, he then deals with the subject of

dress. He produces evidence which proves that the ancient Christians, in the matter of 'garb and apparel,' declined to follow the changing fashions of the world. He asserts that, in their dress, they avoided singularity on the one hand and excess on the other, and that they generally conformed to the decent and orderly customs and fashions of the places where they lived. But they objected to costumes and ornaments that were worn merely to make a display. They found it best, for themselves and others, to observe apostolical directions. He says that Christian women, though rich, adorned themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array, but, as became women professing godliness, with good works.

The early Christians were aware of the dangers arising from 'the excesses of an unruly appetite' in the use of meats and drinks. After quoting biblical warnings against surfeiting and drunkenness, and showing that the law of Christ commands us to fast, to keep under the body, and not to 'make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof,' Cave says that the first Christians exactly transcribed these rules into their lives, being the greatest instances of real abstinence and mortification; and that they practised these rules themselves and pressed them on others. His description of this part of their discipline is instructive. He points out that they knew well that God had given men a charter of freedom which permitted them 'indifferently to use the creatures, and to enjoy them, in some degree, not only for necessity but delight.' But, while they accepted that freedom, they were afraid to go so far as they might, or to do anything that might look towards excess, or argue an irregular and unsober mind. They therefore contented themselves with such provisions as were conducive to health and strength, without any studied seeking after those that were 'more luscious and delightful.' He quotes Justin Martyr in proof of the fact that water was their common drink. They drank wine occasionally, but refused to follow the example of those who swallowed it down 'as men do drink in a burning fever,' quickly making an end of themselves through their intemperance. They were abstinent for their own sakes and for the sake of others. They abhorred drunkenness, a vice that prevailed in the Roman Empire; and, in order to assist those who were in danger of going to excess, they

denied themselves, and set up a standard of sobriety that undoubtedly influenced the customs of the time. These quotations from Cave remind us of some of the evils mentioned by Wesley in the first part of the fourth section of the 'rules.' In order to complete the list we will turn to the third part of *Primitive Christianity*, in which Cave describes the religion of the ancient Christians 'as it respected other men.' In successive chapters he dwells on their justice and integrity in matters of commerce and traffic, their mutual love and charity to one another, their unity and peaceableness, and their submission and subjection to civil Governments.

In Wesley's list of 'evils most generally practised' the first place is assigned to 'taking the name of God in vain.' The exact meaning of the phrase has been questioned. Does it refer to the careless and irreverent way in which oaths were administered and taken in civil courts and business proceedings, or to the prevailing habit of swearing by the name of God in ordinary conversation? It is safe to say that both forms of the evil were in Wesley's mind. Cave shows that the difficulty of definition is of long standing. He says that some of the ancient Fathers held that the taking of an oath was unlawful, but he affirms that the greatest part of them were of another mind, and held that the Scripture prohibition was directed against 'swearing by creatures,' and against light, rash, and false swearing. Wesley accepted the view of the majority of the Fathers. As he moved about the towns and villages of England his ears were constantly assailed by the blasphemies of the British people, and he became conspicuous for his reproofs of swearers. His example was followed by the early Methodists. John Nelson tells us that when he and Mr. Richards came to Oxford in 1743 they met three young gownsmen in the street. 'I think,' he says, 'I never heard a soldier or sailor swear worse than they did. Mr. Richards, being first, and a collegian himself, said, "Gentlemen, I am ashamed to hear you; it is a sad thing that you should come here to learn to be guides to others in the way to heaven and continue to go in the way to destruction yourselves." One of them said with a curse, "What, are you a Presbyterian?" When I spoke another of them said, "These chaps belong to poor Wesley"; so they went away.' This incident occurred in the year when the 'rules' were first published, and it casts some light on the

sense in which Wesley used the words 'Taking the name of God in vain.'[1]

We have shown that the sentence in the first edition of the 'rules' concerning 'going to law' was soon altered into 'brother going to law with brother.' Cave's testimony is that, in the age of which he treats, disputes between Christians were settled by the Church, all recourse to the civil authorities being discouraged and forbidden. In that day such disputes would have been heard by heathen magistrates. In after years, when the empire had submitted—at least formally—to Christianity, and when Christians had been appointed as magistrates, a fair hearing could be expected; but, even in the present day, the practice of the early Church in cases of disputes between Christians has its undoubted advantages.

Turning from law to commerce, we note the rule against 'the using of many words in buying and selling.' It is in harmony with Cave's statement that, in ordinary transactions between man and man, the ancient Christians observed the rule 'to deal with others as they would be dealt with themselves.' They 'took no advantage of any man's ignorance or unskilfulness, so as to grasp that commodity at a far underrate of which they knew the seller did not understand the true price and value; and that, if he did, he would not part with it at such a price.' In those far-off times a Christian who was known to have overreached another in a bargain brought down on himself a protest from the other members of the Church.

Cave draws special attention to the fact of the obedience and subjection of the ancient Christians to civil Government. He quotes Tertullian's witness that it was a solemn part of the Church service in his time to pray for the happiness and prosperity of the princes under whom they lived. 'We pray,' says Tertullian, 'for the Emperors, for the Grandees and Ministers of State, for the prosperity of the age, for the quietness of affairs, for the continuance of their lives and government; that God would give them a long life, a secure reign, an undisturbed house, powerful armies, faithful senators, honest subjects, a quiet people, and indeed whatever they can wish for, either as men or emperors.' They not only

[1] See *Notes on the New Testament*, Heb. vi. 16; James v. 12; also John Nelson's *Journal*, E.M.P., i., 72.

prayed for the emperors; they were noted for the freedom with which they paid all customs and tributes. Addressing the emperors, Justin Martyr declares, 'For your taxes and tributes we are, above all other men, everywhere ready to bring them in to your collectors and officers, being taught so to do by our great Master.' The same spirit is revealed in the sentence in Wesley's 'rules' which forbids 'the buying or selling uncustomed goods,' a practice constantly denounced by him, and firmly repressed in his Societies.[1]

It will be admitted that the fourth and sixth sections of the 'rules' of the United Societies bear distinct evidences of the influence of Cave's *Primitive Christianity*. When we turn to the fifth section, which treats of doing good to the bodies and souls of men, that influence is unmistakable. In the second chapter of Part III. of his book Cave exhibits 'the admirable love and charity' of the primitive Christians. He says that the two great objects of charity are the good of men's souls and their outward and bodily welfare and happiness; and he lays down the lines along which Wesley proceeded in the fifth section of the 'rules.' Allowing for the difference in the circumstances of the times in which the ancient Christians and the Methodists lived, the rules of the early Church and of the United Societies, in the matter of 'doing good,' closely resemble each other. It is only necessary to indicate the special care of the primitive Christians for the sick and the poor. They visited the sick, contributed to their necessities, refreshed their tired bodies, and cured their wounds or sores with their own hands. This work of visitation and healing was organized, and in many places persons were appointed whose proper office it was to attend and minister to the sick. Cave says that they were a kind of clergy-physician; and in process of time they came to be chosen by the bishop of the place, and were immediately subject to him.

In their care for the poor the early Christians set a conspicuous example. The outburst of communistic philanthropy recorded in the Acts of the Apostles was short-lived, but its spirit survived. The relief of the poor was systematized. It was the custom, in Justin Martyr's time, for the individual Christian to lay by in store according as God had prospered him, and to contribute week by week, on the

[1] See 'A Word to a Smuggler,' Wesley's *Works*, xi., 174, 8vo ed.

Lord's Day, to a collection made in the assembly. Those who were able and willing contributed what they saw good, and the collection was lodged in the hands of the bishop or president, and by him distributed for the relief of widows and orphans, the sick or indigent, the imprisoned or strangers, or any that were in need. The offering seems to have been made in connexion with the weekly administration of the Lord's Supper. In the age of Tertullian Cave informs us that a change took place. The offerings were made monthly, or oftener if a man so willed or was able. The contribution was put into a 'Poor Man's Box' that stood in the church, and the money was laid out 'in relieving the needy, burying the dead, providing for orphans, supporting the aged, recruiting the spoiled, supplying the imprisoned and those that were in mines, bonds, or slavery for the profession of Christianity.' It is impossible to read these descriptions of the philanthropies of the ancient Christians and then turn to the 'rules' of the United Societies and study the directions concerning the care of the poor, without recognizing that, in this matter, the early Christians and the Methodists were of one spirit. When we glance over the fifth section of the 'rules' we seem to hear an echo of voices that once sounded in the assemblies of the Christians in apostolic times: 'It is expected of all who continue in these Societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation by doing good; by being, in every kind, merciful after their power; as they have opportunity, doing good of every sort, and, as far as possible, to all men; to their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them that are sick, or in prison.' Those sentences express not only the spirit of the ancient Christians, but the mind of the Master who has said, 'I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me.'

Close students of the New Testament will admit that Wesley's declaration concerning the 'rules' is justified; they are such as we are taught of God to observe, even in His written word, the only rule, and the sufficient rule, both of

our faith and practice. We think, also, they may be fearlessly presented to the judgement of men who are not theologians or readers of Church history, but who know what a Christian ought to be and do. We are able to produce an opinion which will be accepted because it was expressed by a man who was not a Methodist. He possessed a judicial mind, and was well acquainted with the ways of the world. In 1771 a woman whom John Nelson had dismissed from the Society about twelve months before for misbehaviour stood charged at the York Assizes with a capital crime. Nelson, being at that time in the York circuit, was subpœnaed to appear at the Crown bar to assign his reasons for having put this woman out of the Methodist Society. He read the 'rules' in court, and at the end of that one which forbids taking up goods without a probability of paying for them he stopped and said: 'My lord, this was my reason for dismissing this woman from the Society to which I belong.' The judge arose and said: 'Good morality, Mr. Nelson.' Resuming his seat, he desired that the rest of the 'rules' should be read to him. After hearing them he said emphatically to the court: 'Gentlemen, this is true Christianity!'

VIII

RIOTS

John Wesley left Newcastle on April 7, 1743, and journeyed by slow stages to Bristol, visiting his Societies on the way. He found much to encourage him ; but at Wednesbury he saw a condition of things which caused him deep concern. The work in the town and neighbourhood had made considerable progress. A lay preacher, Thomas Williams, had carried on a successful mission there. He was an impetuous man, who often created trouble for his fellow workers. His injudicious conduct at Wednesbury is admitted and lamented by Wesley. When we have all the facts before us it is possible that we may be inclined to mitigate the severity of the judgement that is usually passed on his actions in Staffordshire. He will cross our path again.

It will be remembered that when John Wesley preached at Wednesbury for the first time the vicar, Mr. Egginton, invited him to his house and told him that the oftener he came the welcomer he would be. The vicar assured him that, in his opinion, he had done much good in Wednesbury, and he doubted not but he would do much more. But when Wesley visited the town, after the lapse of a few months, he found that the friendly spirit of Mr. Egginton had vanished. He had not only heard a vehement episcopal charge, but had been informed that the Methodists had publicly preached against drunkards ; and he considered that such preaching was ' designed for satire on himself.' ' From this time,' says Wesley, ' we found more and more effects of his unwearied labours, public and private, in stirring up the people on every side " to drive these fellows out of the country." . . . . The minister of Darlaston and the curate of Walsall trod in the same steps. And these were they who, not undesignedly, occasioned all the disorders which followed there.' [1] Reading between the lines of Wesley's

[1] Moore's *Life of Wesley*, ii., 529.

statement we think it is probable that Thomas Williams had made attacks on drunkards which were so pointed that it was inevitable that Mr. Egginton should apply them to himself.

John Wesley attended the church on Sunday, heard the vicar preach, and made the following record in his *Journal*: 'I think I never heard so wicked a sermon, and delivered with such bitterness of voice and manner.' He had a premonition of what would happen, and tried to prepare his people for the coming storm. Before he left he had a mild specimen of the assaults that were soon to be delivered against the Methodists. When he was preaching in the open air a clergyman who was very drunk rode up to the crowd, and after 'many unseemly and bitter words he laboured much to ride over some of the people.' As he watched this hustling and cursing clergyman he would probably come to the conclusion that Thomas Williams's criticisms were not unneeded in that neighbourhood. Still, he deemed them 'imprudent' and, as he rode towards Bristol, he thought over the whole case, and may then have decided to enlarge the 'rule' forbidding 'uncharitable or unprofitable conversation' by adding to it a sentence concerning 'speaking evil of ministers.'

The question which had emerged at Wednesbury was destined not only to give Wesley much anxiety, but also to play an important part in determining the relations of the Methodists to the Church of England. It cannot be doubted that the moral and religious condition of many of the clergy in the eighteenth century was deplorable. Their critics in the present day are numerous; their defenders are few. Every one who has studied the history of that ominous time is acquainted with facts which cast a melancholy light on clerical morals in many parts of the country. The most reliable historians are stern in their condemnation. It is right to remember that it is the duty of every one to be on his guard against sweeping statements. They invariably need correction. We are in agreement with Sydney, who says, 'The second half of the eighteenth century had bright stars among the clergy, shining out few and far between—men who saved the Church from the danger which menaced her of the removal of her candlestick. Here and there, anchored in lonely parishes, might have been found men who both by their preaching and

living, taught their little congregations to reverence whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report.' He specially mentions White of Selborne, James Hervey, Thomas Twining of Colchester, and William Grimshaw of Haworth. He also includes in his list George Whitefield, we suppose on the strength of his two months' curacy at Dummer, in Hampshire. His statement concerns the second half of the century, and it will be seen that the majority of the exemplary clergymen he names were associated with the Methodist reformation.[1] We are convinced that even in the former half of the century there were not a few clergymen of high character who did their work quietly and effectively, and maintained the honour of the Christian ministry by the purity of their lives.

Sydney's statements have special value inasmuch as he emphasizes the exceptions to what must be considered the general rule. As to the mass of the clergy, he confesses that their condition, especially that of the average country clergy, was most unsatisfactory. The average country parson in the eighteenth century did not answer to Chaucer's description of the parish priest of his day. Chaucer, probably observing the principle of selection, draws a charming picture of the faithful priest :

> Christës lore and hys Apostles twelve
> He taught, but first he followed it himselve.

Such men could be discovered among the clergy of the former half of the eighteenth century, but it would be a defiance of historical fact if we affirmed that they were in the majority. We are reluctantly compelled to accept the dreary descriptions of the condition of the clergy given by historians who have made an exhaustive study of the religious state of England at that time.[2]

It cannot be said that all the clergy of Wednesbury and its neighbourhood ' allured to brighter worlds and led the way.'

[1] Sydney's *England in the Eighteenth Century*, ii., 343.

[2] Sydney's chapter on ' The Religious World ' should be read. He supports his charges against the clergy by quotations from the writings of men whose names demand respect. We would especially commend for close study the first chapter of Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*. In that chapter the causes of the decadence of clerical character are patiently investigated, and the results of inertia and inconsistency are shown.

The character of some of them was disreputable. That fact was known to Wesley; but, as we have said, he deprecated direct attacks on them by his preachers and people. He knew well that any public denunciation of them would be resented, and would, probably, rouse the passions of the mob. It must not be forgotten that the clergy of the eighteenth century were popular with the masses of the English people. When we search for the reasons of such popularity we find several, but that which was predominant was the fact that they were looked upon as the representatives of the Church; and the Church of England at that time was the object of an extraordinary enthusiasm. Myriads of men who never attended its services were ready to rise in its defence, and only needed a signal from a clergyman to march against its adversaries to the battle-cry 'Church and King.' Lecky has pointed out this fact, and no one acquainted with the history of the Sacheverell and other riots will doubt the correctness of his explanation. Wesley knew much more of the temper of the nation than did the members of his Societies, and his knowledge induced him, at the outset of his mission, to adopt methods of reticence and endurance which excited their wonder. A time came when his patience was exhausted. The spectacle of the sufferings of his people touched him to the quick; and then he arraigned the ungodly and persecuting clergy at the bar of public opinion, and spoke and wrote scathing words of utter condemnation of their character and conduct.

John Wesley reached Bristol on April 23, tired with his journey, and rested there for a week. He had the opportunity of conversing with his brother Charles, and we know that one subject of their conversation was the 'rules' of the United Societies. They were carefully considered, and on May 1 Charles Wesley added his signature to the document. Two days afterwards John Wesley set out for Wales. He met there Mr. Marmaduke Gwynne, who afterwards became Charles Wesley's father-in-law. On May 6 he preached in 'the new room' which the Society had just built in Cardiff, in the heart of the town. It was the first Methodist chapel in Wales.[1] Returning to Bristol, he spent most of the week in visiting the Society in Kingswood, and was delighted to find that 'those

[1] It stood in Church Street, formerly St. John Street, and was used until 1829.

vain janglings which had, for a time, wellnigh torn them in pieces, had ceased.'

When John Wesley returned to Bristol Charles Wesley was set free for a journey to the north.[1] He left Bristol on May 17, and returned to London on June 28. His tour among the Societies was marked by events of exceptional importance. After visiting Stroud he came to Evesham, and found that the storm of persecution which had visited that town had lulled. A Quaker and the Mayor had exercised a strong influence and had restrained the violence of the mob. He visited Quinton, preached in the church, and pacified some of the fiercest opponents of Methodism. The vicar of Quinton, Samuel Taylor, was a broad-minded man who soon became closely associated with the Wesleys. Returning to Evesham Charles Wesley spent some time with the Society and was much encouraged. He had only to reprove one person, a woman of great gifts. He says that he would not suffer her to preach 'in the church,' or to usurp authority over the men. It is noteworthy that, at this period, he frequently called a Methodist Society 'a church.' Leaving Evesham, he went to Wednesbury, and felt deep content at being once more with his 'dear colliers.' The seed scattered had taken root; many were added 'to the Church,' and the Society of above three hundred members were seeking 'full redemption in the all-cleansing blood.'

Charles Wesley's record of this visit to Wednesbury enables us to see the situation in that town more clearly. The signs of a coming storm were evident. 'The enemy' raged exceedingly, and continued to preach against the Methodists. While a few of the members of the Society had returned 'railing for railing, the generality had behaved as the followers of Christ Jesus.'[2] Notwithstanding the patient endurance of the majority it was difficult to persuade them to attend services in which they were held up to the ridicule and hatred of their fellow townsmen; and we are not surprised to find that during Charles Wesley's visit he saw a piece of ground, which had been given by a Dissenter, on which a Methodist preaching-house was to be built. He 'consecrated it by a hymn.' On Saturday, May 21, he shared the experiences of his

[1] In John Wesley's *Journal*, by a slip of the pen, Cornwall is mentioned instead of the north.

[2] C. Wesley's *Journal*, i., 307.

Staffordshire members. He came in contact with the mob. He walked to Walsall with a number of the Wednesbury people. As they marched along they cheered the way with divine songs. Reaching the town they went to the market-house, and Charles Wesley stood on the steps and began to preach. The street was full of men bent on mischief. They were under the direction of the principal man in the town. They roared, shouted, and threw stones incessantly. The preacher was often struck, but he continued to exhort the people to be reconciled to God in Christ. At the close of the service, when he was descending the steps, a rush was made at him and he was beaten to the ground. Three times he fell. Then he rose to his feet, and before quitting the steps bade the mob depart in peace. He and his companions made their way through the rioters. As they passed along they were reviled; but 'no man had a commission to touch a hair of their heads.' They returned home, and the next day Charles Wesley preached at Birmingham and Wednesbury. On Monday he said farewell to his Wednesbury friends, after exhorting them 'to continue in the faith,' and showing them that 'we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

Travelling towards the north, Charles Wesley arrived at Nottingham and preached twice at the Cross. There was no breath of opposition, but he instinctively felt that a storm must follow the calm. During his visit a man said to him, 'Take care you do not leave the Church'—a kindly caution he appreciated. Then he rode to Sheffield, where there was a Society which met next door to John Bennet's house. John Bennet was a Derbyshire man, and is well known to those who are familiar with the annals of early Methodism. He had received a good education, had studied law, and was of some social standing among his Derbyshire neighbours. When he was converted he gave himself up to the work of an evangelist, and formed a number of Societies in Derbyshire and Yorkshire. At first he carried on an independent mission; but after a time he placed his Societies under the care of John Wesley and became a Methodist lay preacher. He was one of several workers who formed groups of Societies which were subsequently merged in the United Societies.

Charles Wesley reached Sheffield on May 25 in the afternoon, and soon found he must be prepared to encounter a storm.

The little flock there was in great peril; they were as sheep in the midst of wolves. He says that the ministers of the town had so stirred up the people that they were ready to tear them in pieces. So far as we can judge, the rage of the clergy had not been excited, as at Wednesbury, by any attack on their inconsistencies. It arose from that hatred of Methodism which was quickly spreading among the ministers of the Church of England. Charles Wesley went to the Society-house. The room was crowded. As soon as he was in the desk, with David Taylor by his side, 'the floods began to lift up their voice.' An ensign, who made himself conspicuous, began to contradict and blaspheme. The rioters had equipped themselves for the fray, and stones flew thick in the room, hitting the desk and the people. Perceiving the peril of the congregation and the house, Charles Wesley gave notice that he would preach out of doors. The rioters followed him. The officer caught hold of him and began to revile him. Wesley handed him a tract entitled *A Word in Season; or Advice to a Soldier*, but that did not slake his rage. The service in the open air was held. The preacher prayed particularly for His Majesty King George, and then spoke to the crowd amidst a fusillade of stones. Many of the stones struck him in the face. When he had finished his sermon he prayed for sinners 'as servants of their master the devil.' This was more than the officer could bear. He ran at the preacher with great fury, threatening revenge because he had abused 'the King, his master.' Forcing his way through the crowd, he drew his sword and presented its point to the preacher's breast. Charles Wesley threw open his cassock. Fixing his eye on his opponent, he smiled in his face and said,' I fear God and honour the King.' The soldier had expected him to faint at the sight of the naked weapon, but he mistook his man. His countenance fell. Fetching a deep sigh he quietly left the place.

Charles Wesley returned to Bennet's house. The rioters followed and exceeded in their outrage all that he had seen in Moorfields, Cardiff, and Walsall. They set to work to pull down the Society-house. They carried on their work all night, and by the morning one of the ends of the house was in ruins. Charles Wesley wished to go out of doors and confront the rioters; his friends would not allow him, so he went to bed. The outcries of the mob often broke his slumbers, but he

believed he got more sleep than any of his neighbours. The next day he held an early-morning service, and then went to the centre of the town. From afar he heard the enemy shouting, but he pressed through them, stood up in the midst of them, and preached, ' not one lifting up hand or voice against him.' Then, with David Taylor, he walked through the open street to Bennet's house with the multitude at his heels. They passed the spot where the Society-house had stood. It was demolished, not one stone standing on another. Charles Wesley says that the mob attended him to his lodging with great civility, but as soon as he entered the house where he was lodging they renewed their threatenings to pull it down. The windows were smashed in an instant, and his host was terrified. When the house was about to be taken by storm he was calmly writing ; but the cry of his host and his family interrupted his correspondence and called him out to face ' the sons of Belial.' In the midst of the rabble he found a man who possessed a copy of the Riot Act. Wesley took it, and, after reading it, made ' a suitable exhortation.' The constable who was present, and who had previously encouraged the rioters, seems to have been enlightened by the words of the Act. He roused himself, seized one of the sturdiest of the rebels, and made him prisoner. This display of energy impressed the rioters, and Charles Wesley went back to his lodging and slept in the dismantled room. He tells us that he feared no cold, but dropped asleep with that word ' Scatter Thou the people that delight in war.' He was afterwards told that within the hour his assailants had all dispersed.

It is natural to inquire why no magistrate appears in this turbulent scene. The answer is simple : there was no resident magistrate, at that time, in Sheffield. The nearest Justice of the Peace lived in Rotherham. Wesley's host had gone to that town, and had applied to him for a warrant, but it was refused because the applicant would not promise to forsake ' that way '—that is, would not abandon the meetings of the Society. In the absence of a magistrate in Sheffield the mob worked its will.

Leaving Sheffield, Charles Wesley set out for Birstall. His way lay through the village of Thorpe, and he had been warned that the people there were exceedingly mad against the Methodists. Turning down a lane leading to Barley Hall,

he was ambushed. Men who had been lying in wait rose and rushed on him. They pelted him and his companions with stones, eggs, and dirt. David Taylor was gashed on the forehead, and the blood ran down his face. Wesley's startled horse, flying from side to side of the lane, scattered and broke through the mob. His rider might have escaped, but that was not the Wesley way. The horse was got under some control, and Charles Wesley rode back again. The mob was well organized, and acted under the direction of a 'captain.' He rode up to his assailants and asked the reason why a clergyman could not pass without such treatment. The rustics were puzzled, and began to move away, but the 'captain' rallied them. He swore at Wesley, and hurled stones at him 'that would have killed both man and beast had they not been turned aside by a hand unseen.' The plunging horse broke away again, galloped down a steep hill and left the blaspheming pursuers far behind. Covered with filth, 'his clothes abhorring him,' Wesley reached the shelter of Barley Hall, got ready for his service, preached to a large company, and then went on to Birstall.

Charles Wesley found Birstall 'a land of rest.' The Society had been disturbed by 'gainsayers,' but they had been overcome. 'The little foxes that spoil the vineyard, or rather the wild boars out of the wood that root it up,' had no more place in the Society. The 'Germans' still prowled about the fences to pick up stragglers, but within the vineyard there was peace. The members had fairly overcome evil with good. After his rough adventures Charles Wesley appreciated the rest that came to him. His spirit was refreshed by Christian communion, and by the eager listening of the multitudes that gathered around him when he preached in the open air.

On Sunday, May 29, Charles Wesley was in Leeds. He met the infant Society, which numbered about fifty members, and exhorted them to walk circumspectly, 'since so much depended on the first witnesses.' Then he stood before William Shent's door and preached to a multitude of people, who gave diligent heed to the word and seemed to be ready prepared for the Lord. He also went to the service in 'the great church.' To his surprise he was conducted to 'the ministers' pew.' Five clergymen were there, who gave him a place of honour. He was asked to assist in the administration of the sacrament,

and gladly consented. He found himself in a new world, and the ugly experiences of Sheffield were forgotten for a few blissful moments. As we watch him passing along the line of communicants an insistent question arises in our mind: What would have been the result of the Methodist reformation in England if the Wesleys had been always treated by the clergy with the courtesy and confidence shown by the Leeds ministers on this occasion? That question is interesting, but again we say, 'If the Wesleys had met with universal clerical friendliness, would there have been a Methodist reformation?' That question seems to have been stirring in Charles Wesley's mind when he wrote in his *Journal* his shrewd comment on the courtesy of the Leeds clergy. He says: 'I dreaded their favour more than the stones in Sheffield.'

On Monday, after his pleasant experiences in Birstall and Leeds, Charles Wesley resumed his journey to the north. We see him and his companion approaching Ripley. It is well known that although constantly in the saddle the Wesleys were not accomplished horsemen. John Wesley would ride on hour after hour with a book in his hand, poring over its pages. He had a theory that the way to ride downhill was to give his horse a loose rein, and he found that his rule had some surprising exceptions. Charles Wesley, to the rhythm of his horse's trot, beat out the music of great hymns. Carried away with poetic enthusiasm, he became unconscious of the stumbling of his steed. On his journey to the north he paid the penalty. His horse threw him and fell on him. His companion thought he had broken his neck, but he only bruised his leg, sprained his hand, and was stunned. In a dazed condition he mounted again; and, in describing his accident, he says that it spoiled his making hymns or thinking at all till the next day, when the Lord brought him safe to Newcastle.

On his arrival in Newcastle Charles Wesley preached in the 'Room' to a large congregation. He found that although the work was making great progress several things were hindering it. One of the hindrances he removed. At the commencement of the Revival in London, Bristol, and elsewhere 'scenes' occasioned by the physical convulsion of some of the hearers often occurred.[1] They were reproduced in Newcastle. The blunt north-countrymen called them

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, pp. 284–288.

'the fits,' and the disturbance they caused had a bad effect on those members of the congregation who had been accustomed to the decorum of Church worship. Many left the Methodist services after attending them for a time. Both John and Charles Wesley had hesitated to interfere abruptly in cases of physical prostration which they had reason to think arose from deep conviction of sin. They suspended their judgement, and allowed Time to give its verdict on the genuineness of the experience. Charles Wesley, in Newcastle, heard enough to induce him to adopt another method. He was suspicious of some of those who were afflicted with 'the fits,' and determined to watch them. We give the result in his own words. He says:

> Many, no doubt, were, at our first preaching, struck down, both soul and body, into the depth of distress. Their *outward affections* were easy to be imitated. Many counterfeits I have already detected. To-day one who came from the ale-house drunk, was pleased to fall into a fit for my entertainment, and beat himself heartily. I thought it a pity to hinder him; so, instead of singing over him, as had been often done, we left him to recover at his leisure. Another, a girl, as she began her cry I ordered to be carried out. Her convulsion was so violent as to take away the use of her limbs till they laid and left her without the door. Then immediately she found her legs and walked off. Some very unstill sisters, who always took care to stand near me, and tried which could cry loudest, since I had them removed out of my sight have been as quiet as lambs. The first night I preached here half my words were lost through their outcries. Last night, before I began, I gave public notice that whosoever cried so as to drown my voice should, without any man hurting or judging them, be gently carried to the farthest corner of the room. But my porters had no employment the whole night; yet the Lord was with us, mightily convincing of sin and of righteousness.[1]

The arrangements made by Charles Wesley for the suppression of 'counterfeits' were effective; they did not meet cases of genuine and uncontrollable distress, but they went far to banish displays of fictitious emotion. The return of the reign of order induced some who had abandoned the Methodists to resume their attendance at the services, a result with which Charles Wesley was gratified.

From Newcastle as a centre Charles Wesley visited his ever-widening 'circuit.' On June 16 he set out for Sunderland, feeling reluctant to preach. He had his reward. About a

[1] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, i., 314.

thousand wild people stood around him, and he had never seen greater attention in any at their first hearing. Then he rode on to South Shields. He went to the church, and the people flocked in crowds after him. The minister was alarmed at the presence of such a multitude. When the service was over he shouted to the churchwardens commanding them to quiet the disturbance. Wesley suggests that the clergyman thought he would insist on preaching in the church, like some of the first Quakers. The clerk, sharing the suspicion, came to him bawling out that he was on consecrated ground and had no business to preach on it as he was 'no minister.' When he had cried himself out of breath Wesley whispered in his ear that he had no intention of preaching. This assurance astonished him. Seeing his mistake he said, 'Sir, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, speak it to them without.' A huge crowd had assembled in the churchyard. Many opponents were there, who shouted fiercely that he should be drowned, but he walked quietly through the midst of them and preached on the jailer's question, 'What must I do to be saved?' The churchwardens and others tried to interrupt him, throwing dirt and money among the people. But the message was delivered, and the preacher rode to the ferry and crossed to North Shields. A rough mob had collected with a clergyman at its head. He had got a man with a horn instead of a trumpet, and he gave the word to blow and told the rioters to shout. His conduct roused the men who wished to hear Wesley, and they were violent in their expressions of approbation of the preacher. Riding 'through the crowd,' Wesley found his way back to Newcastle.

On Sunday, June 19, Charles Wesley preached in 'the square' in Newcastle, and some of those who had left the Society were touched to the heart and returned. The day concluded with a love-feast, evidently the first held in the town. Charles Wesley found it hard to say farewell to the loving people. In a few words he depicts a scene which can be best understood by those who know the deep-hearted affectionateness of the Methodists of the north. He says, 'Some cried aloud; others knelt down for my blessing; most laid hold on me as I passed; all wept and made lamentation.' Tearing himself away he rode towards the south, reached Selby, and dined 'in a mixed company.' Seeing that he was

a clergyman, some one asked him ' if there was any good in confirmation.' He answered, ' No, nor in baptism, nor in the Lord's Supper, or any outward thing, unless you are in Christ a new creature.' The conversation having taken this turn, he related his own experience when he was ' under the law.' Those who sat at the inn table were amazed. When he quitted the company he left them some books and set out on his travels. The testimony he had borne in the presence of these strangers brought a feeling of deep content to him as he rode along. All who are acquainted with the strange variations of his personal religious experiences will understand the meaning of his words, ' Still the Spirit was upon me, and I felt stronger faith for *myself* than I ever did before.' He reached Epworth, his native place, preached in the evening, and then laid him down in peace after one of the happiest days he had ever known. He spent the following day in Epworth, having a pleasant talk with some Grimsby Methodists. He preached in the evening at the cross, the minister listening to him at a distance. He met the Society, visited a widow in her affliction, and went about the little town carrying with him the sunshine of his cheerful spirit. On June 24 he rode to Nottingham, comforted with the real presence of his Master, ' the *best company* that earth or heaven can furnish.' When he reached the market-place he saw a crowd gathered around a preacher. A familiar voice sounded in his ear, a voice calling lost sinners to Him that justifieth the ungodly. It was John Wesley, who saw him, and announced that his brother would preach there in the evening. At seven o'clock he delivered his message, many thousands listening in deep silence. After the service the brothers began a Society in Nottingham, which consisted of nine members. It became one of the United Societies which were then being formed in many parts of England.

After the toils of the day were over the brothers had a long talk. Their work was prospering, but it was becoming increasingly difficult. John Wesley had quitted London on June 20, being summoned to Wednesbury by the news that terrible riots had broken out in Staffordshire. In Wednesbury he received, from Francis Ward and others, full descriptions of the outburst of brutal fury that had assailed the Methodists of Darlaston, Wednesbury, and the immediate

neighbourhood. He had ridden to Tamworth to consult an eminent barrister, the son of Sir Edward Littleton. Wesley, though convinced that what had been done was contrary to law, knew not how to advise the sufferers. He was only slightly acquainted with English law, 'having long had scruples concerning it.' There were few men of that day who were better acquainted with ecclesiastical law, but his well-known prejudice against the processes of civil law had hindered him from acquiring knowledge that would have been invaluable to him and his people. The assaults on the Methodists, which were increasing in frequency and bitterness, forced him to examine and modify his 'scruples.' Mr. Littleton assured him that the Methodists had an easy remedy. If they resolutely prosecuted the rioters in the manner he directed, they would find a defence against 'those rebels against God and the King.' Wesley's eyes were opened to the remedy, but he also saw the difficulties that would accompany 'resolute prosecution.' Leaving the cost of the prosecutions out of sight, his conversations with the persecuted Methodists had shown him that no help would be given him by any of the magistrates of the neighbourhood; and without that help his path seemed to be blocked. He rode back to Wednesbury, told the result of his interview, and slightly relieved the burden pressing on the minds of much-abused men.

The story of the riots in South Staffordshire is told in John Wesley's *Journal*, in his *Modern Christianity Exemplified at Wednesbury*, and in his *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Part iii.[1] It is impossible to read the record without indignation, but gradually that feeling is assuaged. As we read the story anger gives place to boundless admiration of the men and women who bore the breaking of the storm and endured its rage for years. At present we are concerned with the events which had occurred about the time when John and Charles Wesley talked together in Nottingham. Let us listen to their voices as they come to us across the years, and we shall hear the pathetic story.

During Charles Wesley's visit to Wednesbury he preached in the Coal-pit Field. Among his hearers were some people

[1] See Wesley's *Works*, viii., 201–214; xiii., 139–162. Mr. W. C. Sheldon and the Rev. Samuel Lees have rendered eminent service by articles contributed to the *Proceedings* of the W.H.S. and the *Methodist Recorder* on the Staffordshire Riots.

who came from Darlaston. They were deeply impressed, and shortly afterwards began to meet together in the evenings to sing and pray and read the Bible. A few persons walked over from Wednesbury and joined them in their worship. These gatherings stirred the anger of their neighbours. The Darlaston mob, which was conspicuous for its ferocity, rose against them ; and one evening the little band of Methodists was assailed with clods and stones. All the windows of John Adams's house, where they had held their meeting, were smashed. Whit-Sunday, in 1743, fell on May 22, and Joshua Constable, of Darlaston, tells us that, ' about Whitsuntide,' his house was attacked, all the windows were broken, and many of his goods were damaged. His Methodist neighbours shared his fate. He gives a long list of sufferers, including in it the name of a widow with five children, who had her goods spoiled, the spinning wheel by which she supported her family being broken. This was a great misfortune, inasmuch as her parish allowance was, at the same time, reduced from two and sixpence to one and sixpence a week. Another woman, who was great with child, was beaten with clubs and abused. In some cases the rioters consented to refrain from wrecking houses on condition that money was given them; but, generally speaking, they rushed about breaking windows and stealing the goods of the people, no man hindering them.

On May 30 John Adams, having obtained a warrant, attempted to prosecute some of the rioters before a magistrate at Walsall. Four or five of the Wednesbury Methodists accompanied him and his wife to that town. When they came to Walsall they went to the ' George,' an inn that was kept by Benjamin Westley. The house was immediately beset by a fierce mob, headed by Mr. Taylor, the curate. The Methodists left the inn and made their way slowly to the residence of Mr. Persehouse, the magistrate. They were pelted with dirt and stones all the way to his gate. The justice came out and said they must go to the town, where he would hear their complaint. This arrangement was highly satisfactory to the mob. Although Mr. Persehouse was with them the rioters renewed their assaults. Francis Ward, of Wednesbury, who had accompanied the Darlaston Methodists, asked the magistrate to read the Riot Act. Instead of doing so he swung his hat round his head twice, as if he had been a huntsman

cheering on the hounds, and shouted, 'Huzza!' His action was understood by the rioters, who became still more outrageous. Coming to the 'George,' the justice said he would hear the case in the street. He was made conscious of the absurdity and danger of such a proceeding, and consented to go into the public-house. John Adams and his wife were about to give their testimony concerning the damage done to their dwelling, but the magistrate would not suffer them to speak. He cried out in his astonishment, 'What! You are Methodists?' and then he left them and went out to the mob. Standing at the door of the inn, he told the rioters they might do what they would. He took off his hat, swung it about, and went away, leaving, as Mr. Sheldon says, the handful of appellants for justice in the hands of a roaring mob.

The Methodists sheltered in the house for a considerable time, vainly hoping that the mob would disperse. At last they went into the street. Francis Ward says, 'As soon as ever we came out they gathered round us again and beat and pelted us with whatever they could find. One of them came to me and struck me on the eye, and cut it so that I expected to lose my sight. I got into a shop and had my eye dressed, and then returned to my friends. The mob pursued me again, fetched me out of the house, and beat me very much; but with much difficulty I got from among them again, and escaped a second time into the house. They fetched me out again, and dragged me along the street, and through the kennel, to and fro, till I had quite lost my strength, and was so weak I was not able to get up. There came a poor woman, and said to the mob, "Will ye kill the man?" and lifted me up. With much ado I got home; but the abuse I there received threw me into a fever.'[1]

Up to Whitsuntide the Walsall and Darlaston mobs were most conspicuous in the organized attacks on the Methodists. On June 20, 1743, we note a development of the hostile forces. The day before a Walsall man saw Mary Bird, a Methodist, in her father's house at Wednesbury. He swore, 'By God, you are there now, but we will kill you to-morrow.' The words were ominous. On June 20 a great multitude of people gathered together in the Wednesbury churchyard. It would be folly to endeavour to persuade ourselves that Mr. Egginton

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xiii., 142, 8vo ed.

was unaware of their purpose. They came from Walsall, Darlaston, and Bilston, and were joined by the men of Wednesbury. To the sound of a horn they were assembled, and then they commenced their march through the town. They visited the house of Mr. Eaton, who was at that time constable. He went to the door with his constable's staff and began reading the Riot Act, but the stones flew so thick about his head that he was forced to leave off reading and retire. The mob broke all his windows, the door of his house, and a large clock in pieces. They then assailed above fourscore houses, in many of which there were not three panes of glass left. Among the houses visited was that of the father of Mary Bird. Seeing her there, the man who had threatened her life took up a stone and said, 'Now, by God, I will kill you.' He threw it, and struck her on the side of the head. The blood gushed out, and she dropped down immediately. The mob also rushed to the house of Mr. Hands, who was an apothecary. They wrecked the house, looted the shop, and one of them took Mr. Hands by the throat, swore he would be the death of him, and threw him on the ground. As soon as he rose another man gave him a blow on his eye and knocked him down again.

On the same day a large mob marched to West Bromwich. When they came to the house of Jonas Turner they asked him 'whether he would keep from those men that went about preaching, and go to the church.' He answered, 'I do go to the church, but I never see any of you there.' Then a man with a great club broke part of a window at one blow. Others laid hold of Mr. Turner and dragged him about sixty yards before he could get loose from them. The mob then broke all his windows and showered stones into the house to destroy his goods. They next assailed the house of Mrs. Turner, who was a widow. They threw in bricks and stones so fast that she was forced to open the door and run out among them. One of the daughters cried, 'My mother will be killed!' The shriek attracted the attention of the rioters, and they pelted her with stones. Another daughter fled to a neighbour's house pursued by the mob. Mrs. Turner, standing before her persecutors, said, 'How can you come and abuse us thus?' A man came to her with a large club and swore if she spoke another word he would knock her on the head and bury her in the ditch. Then he broke all the glass that was left. Quitting

Mrs. Turner, the rioters went off and smashed the windows of many of the neighbouring houses.[1]

The zeal of the mob did not give Mr. Egginton unalloyed pleasure. We judge that it was about this time he interviewed the Darlaston mob, and said, 'Well, my lads, he that has done it out of pure zeal for the Church, I do not blame him. My lads, I hope you will let us settle our affairs in our own parish ourselves; but if these men should come, and they should follow them, then your help will be needful.'[2]

John Wesley arrived in Wednesbury immediately after the riot. He saw the destruction that had been wrought. After his visit to Mr. Littleton at Tamworth he returned to Wednesbury, and then went on to Nottingham. He described what he had seen to his brother, and was comforted by his companionship. Both John and Charles Wesley knew the secret of these assaults. After hearing Mr. Egginton's sermon, in April, John Wesley saw what would happen, and prepared the people for the attacks of the enemy. Charles Wesley's entry in his *Journal* on June 24 is significant. Speaking of his brother, he says, 'From him I had the first account of our brethren's persecution at Wednesbury. Their unhappy minister was the contriver of all.'[3] John Wesley's comment was: 'I was not surprised at all; neither should I have wondered if after the advices they had so often received from the pulpit, as well as from the episcopal chair, the zealous High Churchmen had rose and cut all that were called Methodists in pieces.'[4]

[1] Wesley's *Works*, viii., 210–211, 8vo ed.
[2] *Ibid.*, xiii., 145, 8vo ed.
[3] C. Wesley's *Journal*, i., 319.
[4] John Wesley's *Journal*, iii., 79.

IX

WEST STREET CHAPEL AND CORNWALL

In the conversation with his brother at Nottingham it is probable that John Wesley explained to him an important step he had taken in London. He had acquired a new centre of work. For a considerable time the Wesleys had preached at Short's Gardens, in the West End, not only in the open air but also in a room where the meetings of the local Society were held. The work had prospered. By 'a strange chain of providence' a much more convenient place had come into John Wesley's possession. Among the registers of French Protestant Churches preserved at Somerset House is one of exceptional interest. It is the register of the Church that met in West Street, Soho. The entries in it begin in 1706 and end in 1743.[1] It had been erected on the site of an Episcopal Free Chapel, in which services had been conducted in Erse. In 1700, with the consent of the Bishop of London, a Huguenot congregation, which had been meeting in another part of the West End, removed to the West Street Chapel. They took possession of it, and it became well known as La Tremblade, being named after the town in France from which a large number of the Huguenot refugees had fled to England. It served a useful purpose for many years. Then the French congregation removed to another locality, and in 1743 the chapel, with the dwelling-house adjoining, was advertised for sale. John Wesley must have looked on the building with envious eyes. It was exactly adapted to his needs. The chapel had seating accommodation for more than a thousand persons, and the dwelling-house added much to its value. The fact that the chapel had been 'consecrated' made a special appeal to him. The property belonged to the trustees of a charity, and they were concerned to see it unused and unproductive. A clergyman—probably the Rev. Thomas Black-

[1] Mr. Telford, in his *Two West End Chapels*, has gathered together valuable particulars of the history of the West Street Chapel.

well, the rector of St. Clement Danes—offered the property to John Wesley on a lease, and the offer was accepted. On Sunday, May 29, 1743, Wesley held his first service in the chapel. He preached on the Gospel for the day, and afterwards administered the Lord's Supper to some hundreds of communicants.

At last, although the other churches in London were closed against him, Wesley had found one in which he could preach and give the sacrament to his people. We hear a deep note of satisfaction in his description of his first services at West Street. His experiences in the French Church in Great Hermitage Street, Wapping, had opened his eyes to the advantages of security of tenure, and had suggested possibilities which he was now able to realize. It must be remembered that the Foundery and the other preaching-places in London made no pretensions to be more than Society-rooms. The services held there were not intended to be substitutes for those in churches and Dissenting chapels. They were preparatory to such services, for Wesley took special pains to instruct the Methodists that on Sunday the members who belonged to the Church of England should go to their parish churches, and those who were Dissenters should attend the services in their meeting-houses. He found it possible to improve the character of his morning service. At the Foundery he had been content with a service at which a few hymns were sung, extemporaneous prayers were offered, and a sermon preached. As the congregation would hear 'the lessons' in their own churches the Scriptures were not read. His reference to the reading of the Gospel for the day at West Street Chapel is significant. Still more so is his statement concerning the large attendance at the Lord's Supper. The eye that brings with it the power to see recognizes in May 29, 1743, a crucial date in the history of Methodism.

Fixing our attention for a few moments on the question of the administration of the sacrament at West Street, it is important to note that the large number of communicants at the first service caused it to be prolonged for five hours—from ten to three o'clock. Wesley had much else to do on the same day. He preached at the Great Gardens, an open place in Whitechapel, to an immense congregation; he held leaders' meetings, which occupied much of the time when he

was not speaking in public ; and, afterwards, he met the bands at the Foundery. He ends the record of the day by declaring that, at ten at night, he was less weary than at six in the morning. We who live in an age when a man's work is limited with scientific precision are surprised with this assurance. It is a relief to find that Wesley became conscious of the dangers of a too crowded day. The next Sunday the service in the chapel lasted until nearly four o'clock, so great was the number of communicants. As there were nearly two thousand members at that time in the London Society Wesley saw that the sacramental services at West Street would become unmanageable. He therefore reverted to the plan employed at Great Hermitage Street. He divided the Methodist members into three companies, so that on successive Sundays he might not have above six hundred communicants at once. When we remember that at the time, with the exception of his brother, he was not able to rely on clergymen to help him, our sympathy is excited. Glancing along the path he was to travel, seeing the things hidden from his sight, we are able to discern a merciful purpose in his embarrassments. As they increased they compelled him to adopt measures to overcome them. Once more we learn that the great suggestions of life do not always spring from abounding energy ; they sometimes arise from the weariness of a tired worker.

When Wesley was contemplating the purchase of the West Street Chapel a serious question arose in his mind. If he occupied the place, conducted ' regular ' services in it, and celebrated the sacraments there, would not the accusation that he was ' leaving the Church ' acquire a sharp edge, and become a formidable weapon in the hands of his assailants ? He was accustomed to form his own judgement ; but before he gave expression to it he frequently sought counsel from those whose wisdom and character he respected. In the matter of the West Street Chapel he determined to consult Dr. Thomas Secker, the Bishop of Oxford, who became the Archbishop of Canterbury. He tells us that Dr. Secker was thoroughly acquainted with every step he took in the West Street Chapel case. The bishop's opinion was favourable to his project. In addition he had at other times free conversations with Archbishop Potter, Dr. Gibson, the Bishop of London, and Bishop Lowth. He sums up the result of his

interviews in these words : ' Nor did any of these four venerable men ever blame me for it in all the conversations I had with them.' He expressly says, ' No one in England ever thought or called it leaving the Church.'[1]

Charles Wesley set out on June 25 for the south. He came to Birmingham with the night. On Sunday he preached there, and began a Society consisting of thirteen members. Some of the sufferers from Wednesbury came to him, and he endeavoured to comfort them. On June 28 he slept at the Foundery. On the following Sunday he took the service at West Street, expounding the gospel and administering the sacrament. More fortunate than his brother, he had two clergymen to assist him, Mr. Meriton and Mr. Graves. In the course of the service he took occasion to avow strongly his inviolable attachment to the Church of England. The next Sunday he was again at West Street. The galleries were filled with strangers. He tells us that many were daily added to the Church. During this visit to London he met John Bray, the man who was so closely connected with the great episode in his spiritual life. Bray came to persuade him not to preach until the bishops should bid him, but his reply was, ' They have not yet forbid me ; but, by the grace of God, I shall preach the word in season, out of season, though they and all men forbade me.' It was well that his spirit was firm, for he was about to enter on a tour which told decisively on the evangelization of England.

We have closely watched the progress of the work of the Wesleys in England, and have noted its remarkable success during the three years which followed the establishment of the United Societies. London, Bristol, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and much of the intervening country had been visited, and strong Societies had been formed. The success of the new evangelists in so short a space of time is a surprising fact in modern religious history. We must now fix our attention on a new departure. We must journey to the extreme south-west of England, and see the beginnings of a work that has given to Cornwall a conspicuous place in the story of the Methodist Revival.

In 1743 Cornwall lay far from the busy ways of men. The antiquary, wandering through the dim past, recalls the scenes

[1] Wesley's *Works*, xiii., 236, 8vo ed.

of vanished years. He remembers the times when Cornwall was a country in high favour with continental merchants, who esteemed its mineral wealth above all the riches of Britain. He traces the track-ways along which the blocks of tin were borne to the Isle of Wight, where they were shipped for Gaul. But, as the years went on their way, Cornwall lost its pre-eminent commercial attractiveness. It became secluded within its granite walls. Since the horses of the ancient tin-traders had worn their tracks other bridle paths had been made over the moorlands; but in 1743, as in the rest of the country, there were few highways in Cornwall. The Cornishmen lived, a people apart, in small towns, fishing-villages, hamlets clustering around the tin-pits, in lone houses; and everywhere they were growing up into a virile race. They were devoted to the King and the Church. Their devotion was displayed in times of civil war; and when the threat of invasion by a foreign foe alarmed the nation they fought for England on the sea, and created traditions of valour that are still recited in the Duchy. They were strong men and dared to live alone; they were Celts, and had the passion of the race.

Standing in the towns and villages of Cornwall were churches built to resist the blast of furious storms. They were served by clergy, many of whom were inconspicuous for zeal in the discharge of their religious duties. Even an amiable apologist must admit that among them were men whose character and conduct it is useless to defend. Losing sight of them for a time, we hasten to say that there were exceptions to this rule. Before the Wesleys visited Cornwall there were several clergymen in the Duchy of high Christian character and deep religious experience who did the work of the evangelist with remarkable success. They were Methodists before the Methodist reformation; and, as we think of them, our dislike of universal condemnations is strengthened. Let us look at the lights that shone in the far west before the time when the Wesleys began their great campaign in Cornwall.

In Mr. John Gould Hayman's *History of Methodism in North Devon* we find sketches of two Cornish clergymen who excite our admiration. Particulars concerning them will be found in other books, but we will follow Mr. Hayman's guidance.[1]

[1] There is some uncertainty as to the spelling of Mr. Thomson's name. We follow Mr. Hayman, and also the inscription on the memorial tablet in Barnstaple parish church.

In 1722, after taking his degree at Oxford, George Thomson[1] left the University. He was a Devonshire man, being born at Fremington, near Barnstaple. His family inherited, through his mother, the Colybeare estates, their home being the old mansion of Brynsworthy. He was related to the Eliots, of Port Eliot, in Cornwall, the elder branch of which now takes the title of Earl St. Germans. The Eliots had certain Church preferments in their gift, and George Thomson, having been ordained, was presented to the rectory of Jacobstowe, a parish in the north-west of Cornwall. He was of a sprightly, restless disposition, and soon tired of the monotony of parochial life. He obtained a chaplaincy on board His Majesty's ship *Tyger* and sailed for America. Landing there, he became a military chaplain. Returning to England in 1732, he received a presentation from his uncle to the vicarage of St. Gennys, a parish adjoining Jacobstowe. He had just entered on his new charge when he had a remarkable dream. He dreamt one night that at a particular hour on that day month he would be called on to answer at the judgement-seat of God for his misspent life. The dream returned a second and a third time before the morning. It made a deep impression on his mind. He told it to his friends and to the principal people in his parish, and begged them to find a substitute for him. He shut himself up in seclusion and prepared for his end. Studying his Bible, it seemed as if he could find in it only sentences of condemnation. The time was passing, and his misery increased. Then, about the middle of the month, he turned to the Epistle to the Romans. The great doctrine of Christ, the propitiation for sin, came in view. Light increased as he realized that it was not only for the sins of the whole world the Redeemer died, but for *his* sins. Simply trusting in his Saviour, there came to him the assurance that his sins were forgiven, and the peace that passeth understanding filled his heart. It was the experience of a man convinced of sin, with no one to help him, left alone with his Bible, and given up to the teaching and leading of the Holy Spirit. Completely assured of the forgiveness of his sins, he calmly awaited the approach of death. The fatal day dawned ;

[1] It has been suggested that Mr. Thompson, the minister of St. Bartholomew's, near Ponpon, in South Carolina, whom John Wesley met there in April, 1737, was George Thomson. A comparison of dates is sufficient to destroy the illusion. See Wesley's *Journal*, i., 350, *note*.

the hour passed ; he still lived, and he glorified God by offering praise in the presence of his friends. He set about his work, a new man with a new inspiration. The joyful news of sins forgiven became the central theme of his preaching. In his own parish and the surrounding district he proclaimed the doctrine of personal, conscious forgiveness, and bore witness to his own experience of its truth. As a result his church was crowded with earnest worshippers ; it became the centre of an ever-widening circle of evangelical influence. The fact that George Thomson's conversion took place in 1732 must be emphasized. He found his way to the Cross in solitude. The path along which he travelled was found and followed by two men six years later. In 1732 John and Charles Wesley were at Oxford, busy with the affairs of the ' Holy Club.' Then in May, 1738, they also entered into George Thomson's experience. That experience had the same effect on them as on him ; it filled them with a boundless love for Christ and for the perishing children of men.

One example of Thomson's influence as an evangelist stands out with special clearness. In 1742 John Bennett, a clergyman, when he was more than seventy years of age, heard him preach on 'Salvation by Faith.' He had charge of three parishes—Laneast and Tresmere in Cornwall, and North Tamerton, which lay on the Devon side of the Tamar, about twelve miles from Laneast. Many of the ' livings ' in Cornwall were poor, the incomes of some of them being insufficient to maintain a man and his family. As a consequence ' pluralists ' abounded. John Bennett, however, was distinguished by his gallant effort to meet the claims of his wide district. In the performance of his Sunday duties he was accustomed to travel forty miles and to preach three times. He had preached and worked for many years before he heard George Thomson's sermon, but all the time the doctrine that is ' writ large ' on the pages of the New Testament was hidden from his sight. At last came the dawn and the bright day. He accepted the teaching of St. Paul, realized its meaning and its truth by the illuminating test of personal experience, and at once began to preach ' salvation by faith.' He joined Thomson in his evangelistic work ; and so, before the Wesleys visited Cornwall, there were at least two clergymen who were preparing the way for their great mission. Searching diligently for a third, we watch the young vicar of

Lanlivery, a parish in the south of Cornwall not far from Lostwithiel. He is winsome in manners, and much beloved and respected. He has a high standard of ministerial duty. He reproves, exhorts, and watches over his people; preaching, catechizing and visiting diligently. He is one of the most exemplary ministers in Cornwall, but he mourns in secret over the evident unfruitfulness of his work. Our sympathy is excited, and we wish that he could come into contact with some one who would lead him into an understanding of the truths that had vivified the ministry of George Thomson and John Bennett. But we must wait for a few years. In 1746 we shall see him, a curate in Truro, and shall watch him as he passes through darkness and twilight into cloudless day. We all now know Samuel Walker of Truro, who in after years became the friend and counsellor of John Wesley; but the Methodist mission in Cornwall must be opened without his aid.

On July 13, 1743, Charles Wesley set out from Bristol in company with a fellow traveller who rode with him to Exeter, and twenty miles beyond, in the direction of Cornwall. Why did Charles Wesley take this journey? The moving cause will be found in Bristol. Those who are familiar with the roll of the Bristol Methodist Society for 1741 will remember that the name of Joseph Turner occurs in it. He was a sea-captain. In 1743 he landed at St. Ives, in Cornwall, and 'was agreeably surprised to find a few persons who feared God and constantly met together. They were much refreshed by him, as he was by them.'[1] These persons belonged to a Religious Society, founded probably on Dr. Woodward's plan. When Captain Turner got back to Bristol he told the news of his discovery, and excited interest in the case of the people of St. Ives. Thomas Williams and William Shepherd, two lay preachers, were sent to Cornwall, and began to preach there. Then Charles Wesley resolved to go to St. Ives and see the position of affairs for himself. When he parted from his companion on July 15 he set out alone. It was a perilous adventure. In riding towards Bodmin he got lost in pathless wilds. He tells us that both horse and rider were 'worked down' by wandering sixty miles. The next day he reached Redruth, left it at four o'clock, and had some difficulty in striking the path to

[1] *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iv, 95.

St. Ives. Crossing the river Hayle just before the sea came in, he pushed on. Soon two tinners met him, and cheered him by wishing him good luck in the name of the Lord. The news of his coming had been spread. He soon had evidence of that fact. 'My next greeting,' he says, 'was from the devil's children, who shouted as I passed, and pursued me like the men out of the tombs.' The two lay preachers met him, and they rejoiced together. In the late evening he reached St. Ives, being accompanied by a crowd of men and boys who raged around him as he made his way to the house of John Nance, which stood at the top of the Street-an-Garrow—that is, 'the rough street.' In John Nance's house he slept in peace.

On Sunday, July 17, Charles Wesley began the day by having a conversation with some of the 'loving and simple' members of the Society. He describes them as 'sheep in the midst of wolves.' He found he must expect a renewal of his Sheffield and Wednesbury experiences, for the clergy of St. Ives had stirred up the people, and fierce persecution was threatened. The situation was relieved by the fact that the Mayor of the town, Mr. John Stephens, a Presbyterian, was resolved on checking all attempts at rioting, and would lay a strong hand on 'the sons of violence.' But his influence had failed to restrain the clergy from attacking 'the new sect' from the pulpit. The inevitable consequences followed. Charles Wesley went to church and listened to the rector's sermon with some astonishment. He preached from that double-edged text, 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven'; a text which, under the circumstances, required careful handling. Charles Wesley had prayed for 'a quiet heart and a steady countenance,' but he must have been tried when the rector reached 'the application' of the sermon. He says that it was 'downright railing at the new sect, as he calls us, those enemies to the Church, seducers, troublers, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.' In the afternoon he rode to Wednock with almost all the members of the St. Ives Society. He again went to church. The preacher was the Rev. William Hoblyn, the rector of Lydford and lecturer of St. Ives. He entertained his crowded audience with a curious discourse on 'Beware of false prophets.'

Charles Wesley stood near him, and heard 'such a hotch-potch of railing, foolish lies as Satan himself might have been ashamed of.' After the service he interviewed Mr. Hoblyn, and mildly told him he had been misinformed. 'No,' he answered, 'it was all truth.' 'Sir,' said Wesley, 'if you believe what you preach, you believe a lie.' 'You are a liar,' was the swift reply. After assuring him of his goodwill, and reminding him of the Great Day, Wesley broke off the conversation, and in the open air preached to a crowd of people. Then he returned to St. Ives and met the Society.

Charles Wesley had not long to wait for the results of the sermons delivered in the churches. On the Monday he attempted to preach in St. Ives, near the market-house. He found the enemy set in array against him, but, confronting the mob, he began to sing the hundredth psalm. The rioters had a drum with them, and beat it so vigorously that it was impossible to proceed. Going back to his lodgings he met the Mayor, who saluted him and hurried along to disperse the rioters. The bitter and unscrupulous hostility of the clergy was a fact that had to be pondered. It seemed to forebode the total failure of his mission. The sermons in the churches had a great influence over those who heard them, and they stirred up the passion of the mob to a point of irrestrainable intensity. But Wesley was not dismayed. He had learned lessons elsewhere which sustained his courage. He knew that Englishmen do not willingly insist on believing utterly false statements. They are easily deceived by half truths, but most of them have a robust hatred of whole lies. Then, though they dislike cant and hypocrisy, they soon appreciate sterling goodness. The best defenders of Methodism have ever been the consistent Methodists. There was another force which fought against the hostility of the clergy. Charles Wesley had seen it working among the most depraved and violent men. The mightiest weapon in the hands of the evangelist is the evangel. The appeal of the gospel to men who are convinced of sin is irresistible. Charles Wesley knew the strength of the appeal, and was certain that if he could get a hearing and reach the crowd of men and women who rarely, if ever, darkened the doors of the churches, the music of the gospel would call the wanderers home. His conviction was speedily confirmed by his success.

In the afternoon of the day when he had failed to get a hearing in the market-place of St. Ives Charles Wesley went to Kenneggy Downs, in the parish of Breage. Nearly a thousand 'tinners' had assembled to hear him. He had found his real sphere in Cornwall. The miners listened with great attention, and received the seed into honest and good hearts. He says, 'While I pointed them to the Lamb of God many wept, and particularly the captain-general of the tinners, a man famous in his generation for acts of valour and violence, and his usual challenge to fight any six men with his club. He is known through the west by the title of "the destroyer." This leopard will soon, I trust, lie down with the lamb.' The service on the downs was after Wesley's own heart. It must have reminded him of Kingswood. He went back to the seat of war at St. Ives with strength renewed, and in the Society room he expounded the miracle of blind Bartimaeus. The power of the Lord overshadowed the congregation. Opposers were there, but many of them trembled and some wept.

The next day, after expounding in the room at St. Ives, Charles Wesley continued his mission to the 'tinners' by preaching at Pool, in Illogan, midway between Camborne and Redruth. He was interrupted by a drunken man, but the miners made short work of him. When he attempted to seize the preacher and push him down the hill, 'in a moment the Philistines were upon him.' Wesley sought to restrain the zeal of his own defenders, and his influence prevailed. Taking the disturber by the legs and arms, the crowd quietly handed him down from one to another and so put him outside the congregation; he was then heard no more. Silence being restored, the 'tinners' listened with rapt attention as Wesley proclaimed 'the faithful, acceptable saying.' All hearts seemed bowed and opened to receive it. As the preacher returned to St. Ives he felt a conviction that God was calling these people to Himself. He was further encouraged when he went to the room in the evening. It was clear that the prayers for the opposers in St. Ives were beginning to be answered. Some of the fiercest of them were present and behaved with great decency. All that was needed was that the virulent attacks of the clergy should cease; the mob would then have been gradually subdued by the power of the gospel.

But the vision which had begun to brighten before the eyes of Charles Wesley was soon clouded. He preached at Zennor and Morvah. He was welcomed by the people at both these places ; at Zennor they came in ' to a man at the joyful news.' Zennor was one of four parishes under the pastoral care of the Rev. William Symonds. He was the curate of St. Ives from 1735 to 1768. The friendliness shown to Wesley by the Zennor people annoyed him. As a clergyman he has slight claims on our respect. He was true to the type of ' the convivial parson.' On a Sunday afternoon he could generally be found at the ' George and Dragon ' in St. Ives, discussing under a cloud of smoke the news of the day and the contents of the *Sherborne Mercury* with his churchwardens.[1] Those discussions must have been animated at the time when Wesley visited the town, and it is probable that the plan of campaign against the Methodists was arranged at these festal meetings.

On Friday, July 22, an organized assault was made on the Methodists in the St. Ives room. Charles Wesley shall describe it. He says : ' I had just named my text at St. Ives, " Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people, saith your God," when an army of rebels broke in upon us, like those at Sheffield or Wednesbury. They began in a most outrageous manner, threatening to murder the people if they did not go out that moment. They broke the sconces, dashed the windows in pieces, tore away the shutters, benches, poor-box, and all but the stone walls. I stood silently looking on ; but mine eyes were upon the Lord. They swore bitterly I should not preach there again, which I disproved by immediately telling them Christ died for them all. Several times they lifted up their hands and clubs to strike me, but a stronger arm restrained them. They beat and dragged the women about, particularly one of great age, and trampled on them without mercy. The longer they stayed, and the more they raged, the more power I found from above. I bade the people stand still and see the salvation of God, resolving to continue with them and see the end. In about an hour the word came, " Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther." The ruffians fell to quarrelling among themselves, broke the Town Clerk's—their captain's—head, and drove one another out of the room.

' Having kept the field, we gave thanks for the victory ;

[1] *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iv., 187.

and in prayer the spirit of glory rested upon us. Going home, we met the Mayor, with another justice, and went back to show him the havoc which the gentlemen and their mob had made. He commended our people as the most quiet, inoffensive subjects, encouraged us to sue for justice, said he was no more secure from such lawless violence than we, wished us success, and left us rejoicing in our strong Helper.'

'I cannot find one of this people who fears those that can kill the body only,' he says on the following day. 'It was next to a miracle that no more mischief was done last night. The gentlemen had resolved to destroy all within doors. They came upon us like roaring lions, headed by the Mayor's son. He struck out the candles with his cane, and began courageously beating the women. I laid my hand upon him, and said, "Sir, you appear like a gentleman; I desire you would show it by restraining these of the baser sort. Let them strike the men or me if they please, but not hurt poor, helpless women and children." He was turned into a friend immediately, and laboured the whole time to quiet his associates. Some not of the Society were likewise provoked to stand up for us, and put themselves between; others held the ruffians, and made use of an arm of flesh. Some of our bitterest enemies were brought over by the meekness of the sufferers and malice of the persecutors. They had sworn to drive us all out, and then take possession of our house; but their commission did not go so far. One was overheard saying to his companions as they were going off, "I think the desk was insured; we could not touch it, or come near it."'[1]

It is regrettable to find the Mayor's son in such evil company, but his presence enables us to discover the men who were really responsible for the attack on the Society-room. He must have conversed with his father and explained why he had taken part in the riot. A few days after it occurred the Mayor told Charles Wesley that the ministers were the principal authors of all the evil. They continually represented the Methodist preachers in their sermons as Popish emissaries, and urged the enraged multitude to take all manner of ways to stop them. The Mayor bluntly described the preaching of the clergy as 'cursing and lies,' but it undoubtedly served their purpose. It must be remembered that in 1743 England

[1] C. Wesley's *Journal*, i., 324–325.

was at war, and that English and French troops had fought against each other at the battle of Dettingen. The country was in a state of great excitement, fearing a French invasion of the south coast and the arrival of the Pretender to challenge the right of the reigning King. Men throughout England were suffering from 'exalted nerves,' and a whisper that some stranger was 'a Popish emissary' was enough to raise a town against him. The clergy of St. Ives thought they had discovered an indubitable proof that the Methodist preachers were Papists. Mr. Symonds and Mr. Hoblyn were not distinguished by the accuracy of their theological knowledge. They were filled with horror when they heard that Charles Wesley preached what Mr. Hoblyn called 'that damnable Popish doctrine of justification by faith only.' We may be amused at his ignorance; but ignorance is mighty and often prevails. It prevailed at St. Ives and Wednock. At the latter place, where Mr. Hoblyn was the curate, a mob was raised known as the 'minister's mob.' On Sunday, July 24, it attacked the people who were listening to Charles Wesley as he preached in the open air. The congregation was broken up. The preacher saw ten cowardly ruffians who attacked an unarmed man and beat him with their clubs till they felled him to the ground. Finding it impossible to continue the service, Wesley walked on slowly to St. Ives, pursued by the hostile crowd all the way to John Nance's house. As the rioters lingered there he went out to them and looked them in the face. They pulled off their hats and slunk away.[1]

The rioting at St. Ives continued, but by the firmness of the Mayor the town at last became quiet. He plainly told Mr. Hoblyn, 'the fire-and-faggot minister,' that he would not be perjured to gratify any man's malice. Mr. Hoblyn had often said that Charles Wesley and his companions 'ought to be driven away by blows, not arguments,' and the Mayor was determined he would not indulge him in his experiments. He made it known that he had resolved to swear twenty new constables and suppress the rioters by force of arms. He seized their drum, and set the town against himself by opposing the fury of the mob. On July 26, when Charles Wesley was preaching, he stood at a little distance and awed the rebels. He was an admirable man, and occupies an honourable position

[1] C. Wesley's *Journal*, i., 326.

in the small group of English magistrates who, in the eighteenth century, were not afraid to do their duty.

When Charles Wesley paid his second visit to Pool on July 26 a churchwarden stopped him and demanded his 'letters of orders.' Wesley, wondering at his ignorance, gave him his Oxford sermon and rode on. But he followed, shouting that Wesley should not preach in 'his parish.' He interrupted the preacher when the service began by putting his hat to Wesley's mouth. To avoid further contention Wesley left the spot, being followed by a congregation of nearly two thousand people, most of whom were 'tinners.' The churchwarden and his supporters drove the crowd before them until the border of the next parish was almost reached. The day was hot, the pursuers were weary, and they decided that their zeal for the Church had been sufficiently displayed. So they went back to Pool and refreshed themselves in the old ale-house there. The churchwarden was a man of discretion. He did not pay the bill himself. In the parish book of Illogan the following entry may still be seen: 'Expenses at Ann Gartrell's on driving the Methodist, nine shillings.'[1] The churchwarden must have been chagrined when he heard that when Wesley reached the border of 'his parish' he did not cross it, but preached, to the great joy of those who longed to hear him.

Charles Wesley's first visit to West Cornwall demonstrated the fact that, while the clergy and their supporters were bitterly opposed to the preaching of the gospel by the Methodists, the common people in many parts heard them gladly. The eagerness of the 'tinners' was remarkable. On Kenneggy Downs, at Pool, Morvah, Gwennap, St. Hilary Downs, and elsewhere, the miners flocked to the open-air services. At Morvah a Society was formed. At St. Just, which was visited on Saturday, July 30, Charles Wesley preached to a great crowd of 'tinners.' He says: 'The hearts of thousands seemed moved as the trees of the forest by that wind which bloweth as it listeth. The door stood wide open, and a multitude are just entering in. Here it is that I expect the largest harvest.' His conviction was strengthened when he preached there the next day after attending the evening service in the church. No one offered to stir or move a hand or tongue. He

[1] Dr. George Smith's *History of Wesleyan Methodism*, i., 203.

stood on a green bank, and as he watched the devout worshippers gathered in the plain by the town he felt that the fields were white unto harvest. All that was needed was that the Lord should send forth the reapers.[1]

In spite of persecution Charles Wesley's mission had been successful. On Sunday, August 7, he rode rejoicing to Gwennap, and tells us that he then saw the end of his coming to Cornwall and of Satan's opposition. Such a company assembled as he had not seen excepting some few times at Kennington. He proclained to the earnest listeners that 'God sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world.' The convincing Spirit was working among the people in a way he had seldom, if ever, known. It must have been hard for him to tear himself away from the whitening field. But he had to leave. John Wesley had summoned him to London 'to confer with the heads of the Moravians and Predestinarians.' He and Mr. Shepherd had to ride nearly three hundred miles in five days. He was willing to undertake this labour for peace, though the journey was too great for the riders, and for their horses which had been used almost every day for three months. We watch the travellers with regret. They were bound on a futile errand; the conference was not held. At Exeter Charles Wesley met his old friend, Felix Farley, of Bristol, and preached there to about a thousand people, 'mostly gentlemen and ladies, with some clergy.' His text was, 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.' The people listened attentively, and many followed him to the inn to take leave, and wish him good luck in the name of the Lord. Seeing that a good impression had been made, he left Mr. Shepherd in the city 'to keep up the awakening,' and rode on alone towards London. We are not surprised that he missed his way. His mistake led him to Bridport. There he conversed with a woman who was 'not far from the kingdom of God.' When she asked him what Church she should join he dilated on the excellence of the Church of England. We wonder if he passed

[1] On the previous evening he and Mr. Shepherd had visited the Land's End. Standing on the extremest point of the rocks they had sung the hymn 'Come, Divine Immanuel, come.' It was published in *Hymns and Sacred Poems* in 1749, and is entitled, 'Written at the Land's End.' 'Thou God of glorious majesty,' the hymn in which the verse appears beginning, 'Lo! on a narrow neck of land,' was published in the same volume. It is called 'A hymn for seriousness.' It has been popularly supposed that the latter hymn was composed at the Land's End. This has not yet been proved; but it was not the hymn sung on the rocks by Charles Wesley and Mr. Shepherd on July 30, 1743.

through Lyme Regis. If so, did he remember that he was in the land of his Nonconformist ancestors, and did he visit the grave of Bartholomew Westley in the churchyard near the sea? He makes no note of the fact. The subject of Nonconformist ancestors was so rarely mentioned in the Epworth Rectory that he was probably ignorant of the resting-place of his great-grandfather. He resumed his journey across the county of Dorset, called at Salisbury to see his sister, Mrs. Hall, and then made his way to London, reaching the Foundery on August 12. There he learned that the Moravians would not be at the conference, Spangenberg having left England.

John Wesley had travelled from Newcastle, John Nelson from Yorkshire, and Charles Wesley from the Land's End, seemingly for little purpose. But their meeting was not in vain. It convinced them of the uselessness of these endeavours to renew their close association with the Moravians, and it had another and greater result. Charles Wesley's account of his experiences in Cornwall, and his predictions of the great successes that would arise from following up the work, produced an immediate effect. John Wesley determined that he would visit Cornwall.

X

JOHN WESLEY IN CORNWALL

On July 18, 1743, when Charles Wesley was contending with rioters at St. Ives, John Wesley, accompanied by John Downes, set out from Newcastle for London. John Downes was one of the first Methodists at Horsley, in Northumberland. He had rendered good service at the Orphan House by reading sermons to the congregation there when no preacher was present. In 1743 he entered on the rough experiences of the itinerant life, and for many years was a lay preacher much valued by Wesley. The travellers reached London on July 30 and stayed there for nearly a month.

The Society in London was making progress in numbers and in organization, and John Downes must have been impressed when he beheld the ' order ' of the services and the ' steadfastness ' of the members. The services at the Foundery, while retaining their simplicity of form, were advancing in several particulars. We note that in 1742 John Wesley published a little hymn-book which must have assisted in improving the congregational singing. Before that date the volume of *Hymns and Sacred Poems* had made a deep impression. We have seen that occasionally the Wesleys used a hymn from it, ' lining it out ' in their open-air and more private services. The members who could afford half-a-crown bought the book, and it helped them in the hours of their devotional reading. The larger volume, however, was out of the reach of the poorer Methodists. John Wesley met their case by selecting twenty-four of the choicest hymns from the larger book and selling the selection at threepence, one edition, according to Dr. Osborn, being sold at twopence. The little book was the loved companion of many of the Methodists throughout the country. As they became familiar with the hymns the singing in their services increased in volume and heartiness. In 1742 a small tune-book of thirty-six pages, bearing the title *A Collection of Tunes set to Music as they are*

commonly sung at the Foundery, was published by John Wesley. It undoubtedly helped to improve the congregational singing, although it falls an easy victim to the criticism of the modern musician. When John Downes attended the services at West Street Chapel he must have been arrested by the contrast between them and those to which he had been accustomed in the north. He was a keen observer, and his mind would be busy with a new problem. He must have felt that these services were the heralds of the Methodism of the future.

In watching the development of the organization of Methodism at the period we have reached we alight on an interesting and illuminating fact. It was about this time that Wesley formed the Select Societies. We are familiar with the United Societies, the bands, and the classes, but the Select Societies are new to us. Their creation was a revelation of Wesley's character. We presume that no one who understands him will accept the description which depicts him as an ambitious autocrat who went on his own way regardless of the opinions of other people. Devoting that caricature as a prey to oblivion, let us look at him as he is revealed to us by his action in forming the Select Societies.

What light does the creation of the Select Society in London shed on Wesley's character? In *A Plain Account of the People called Methodists* he gives us the reasons that moved him to form it.[1] He tells us that when he was in London he was accustomed to spend an hour on Monday morning with a small group of people who were distinguished by their intense desire to continue in 'the light of God's countenance.' He says, 'My design was, not only to direct them how to press after perfection, to exercise their every grace, and improve every talent they had received, and to incite them to love one another more, and to watch more carefully over each other, but also to have a select company, to whom I might unbosom myself on all occasions without reserve, and whom I could propose to all their brethren as a pattern of love, of holiness, and of good works.' The Society was not encumbered with many rules, 'the best rule of all being in their hearts.' Three directions had to be observed. In order that the members might continue to have full confidence in each other nothing

[1] See *Works*, viii., 260–261, 8vo ed.

spoken in the Select Society was to be repeated to other people. Then, every member was to agree to submit to his minister in all indifferent things, and each member was to bring once a week all he could spare towards a common stock. As to the proceedings of Society, Wesley says, ' Every one here has an equal liberty of speaking, there being none greater or less than another. I could say freely to these, when they were met together, " Ye may all prophesy one by one (taking that word in the lowest sense), that all may be comforted." And I often found the advantage of such a free conversation, and that " in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." Any who is inclined so to do is likewise encouraged to pour out his soul to God. And here especially we have found that " the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." ' In reading this description of the Select Society we see the absurdity of the pictures of John Wesley which represent him as an ecclesiastical martinet who ruled the Methodists by crack of whip.[1]

During his brief visit to London in August, 1743, Wesley secured another chapel as a centre for carrying on his work. The Foundery served the purposes of the Methodists who lived in the city, and the West Street Chapel not only met the wants of those who lived outside Temple Bar, but also provided a meeting-place in which the Societies could assemble for the administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. On the Surrey side of the river, near London Bridge, there was no Methodist chapel ; the Societies there had to be content with ' rooms.' Mr. Henry J. Foster, in an important article in the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, has shown that there were many Religious Societies in Southwark, three of them having their meeting-places within the narrow area of small streets and courts bounded by the Borough High Street on the east and Blackfriars Bridge Road on the west.[2] While the Wesleys were connected with the Fetter Lane Society they frequently visited the Religious Societies across the Thames. In 1743 a Methodist Society existed in Southwark. It met in a ' room ' in Long Lane, and as it prospered larger

[1] In John Wesley's *Journal*, iii., 208, there is a list of the Select Society in London in September, 1745. It consisted of twenty-five men. Similar Societies were formed in other parts of the country. On May 7, 1780, Wesley met the Select Society in Whitehaven, one of its members being a negro woman with whom he was much pleased. Select Societies continued to exist for many years. See *Journal*, vi., 277.

[2] *W.H.S. Proceedings*, vii., 106–111.

accommodation was required. In the short street called Crosby Row, which leads from Long Lane into Snowsfields, there was a chapel, built in 1736 by Mrs. Elizabeth Ginn, of Newington Butts, who had been a member of the Maze Pond Baptist Meeting-house. In Wilson's *History of Dissenting Churches* there is a note concerning her extracted from the *Daily Advertiser* of June 15, 1738, which informs us that she erected the chapel in order to promote the liberty of private judgement and Christian charity, and that 'truth in its native purity and plainness might be preached, and the religion of Jesus freed from obscurity and imposition.' In order to secure these results her 'favourite preacher,' Dr. Sayer Rudd, was appointed to the new chapel. Wilson says, 'The opinions he had adopted with regard to the Trinity, which in his writings bear the semblance of Sabellianism, had involved him in frequent squabbles with his brethren, and on account of them he had been, in a manner, disowned by his denomination.' Mrs. Ginn's death in 1738 was a blow to him, and his preaching failed to attract a congregation. He became discouraged; and in 1742 he left the Baptists, joined the Church of England, and was presented to the living of Walmer, in Kent.[1]

After Dr. Sayer Rudd's secession the Snowsfields chapel seems to have become derelict. On August 6, 1743, it was offered to Wesley, and the offer was accepted. When it became known that he designed to preach in Snowsfields a zealous woman cried out: 'What! At Snowsfields! Will Mr. Wesley preach at Snowsfields? Surely he will not do it! Why, there is not such a place in all the town. The people there are not men, but devils.' It was certainly a forlorn hope, but he resolved 'to try if God was not stronger than them.' So in the evening of August 8 he preached in the chapel on 'Jesus said, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'[2]

Having secured a third important centre in London, Wesley set out for the west of England. He paid a short visit to

[1] Wilson's *History*, iv., 279–282.

[2] This chapel was used by Wesley for twenty years. As the result of the great disturbance that agitated the Methodist Society there in 1763 it was necessary to erect another chapel. This was opened by John Wesley on August 18, 1764. It was an octagon building which stood not far from the present Long Lane Chapel, of which it was the predecessor. See *Journal*, v., 92, *note*; also *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, iv., 29.

Bristol, and then, on August 26, he began his journey to Cornwall, his travelling companions being John Nelson and John Downes. As they journey along the country roads we have a chance, now and then, to find out what they are carrying in their saddle-bags. We see a number of small books, among them being a good supply of the cheap hymn-books. Our attention is specially arrested by a duodecimo pamphlet containing about sixty pages, the first and second editions of which were printed in 1743, the former by John Gooding, of Newcastle, and the second by Felix Farley, of Bristol.[1] This pamphlet produced profound effect in Wesley's day, and it still continues to guide the thoughts of men who desire to understand his motives and the character of his work. We will consider some of the outstanding features of this convincing 'Apologia.'

In the first paragraph of *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* Wesley strikes the note that pervades the whole pamphlet. He declares that he is ready to give any who are willing to hear a plain account both of his principles and his actions. He desires to be understood, and takes infinite pains to remove all misconceptions concerning himself and his fellow workers. Frankness and sincerity shine through every sentence of the *Appeal*. He at once reveals his motive in carrying on his work. He says, 'We see the numberless follies and miseries of our fellow creatures. We see on every side either men of no religion at all, or men of a lifeless, formal religion. We are grieved at the sight, and should greatly rejoice if by any means we might convince some that there is a better religion to be attained—a religion worthy of God that gave it. And this we conceive to be no other than love, the love of God and of all mankind; the loving God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, as having first loved us, as the fountain of all the good we have received, and of all we ever hope to enjoy; and the loving every soul which God hath made, every man on earth as our own soul.' He shows that the whole aim of his teaching is to lead men, through faith in Christ, into a knowledge of God's love and into the love of men for His sake.

Wesley's description of the 'religion' he taught possesses eternal beauty, but he was aware that his teaching had been

[1] In the edition of his *Works* issued in 1772, Wesley says that the pamphlet was written in 1744, but Mr. Green has pointed out this mistake in his *Wesley Bibliography*, 28.

so misrepresented as to make it impossible for ' men of reason and religion ' to accept it. So he bends his strength to the task of removing their misapprehensions. He first of all appeals to two classes of the men of reason—those who do not receive the Christian system as of God, and those who do receive it, who believe the Scripture, but yet do not take upon themselves the character of religious men. In reading this section of the *Appeal* we pass into the twilight of the eighteenth century. We move among the Deists, Arians, and worldlings of that distracted time and watch Wesley as he deals with them. He was an accomplished controversialist, detecting a logical fallacy in a moment, and destroying it with a stroke. The relentlessness of some of his controversial methods is well known, but in his *Appeal* its gentleness and ' sweet reasonableness ' are evident. His self-restraint is specially displayed in his treatment of the Deistic ' men of reason '; as for the ' worldlings,' his rapier-thrusts are swift ; but he keeps his temper and his attack is irresistible.

After dealing with ' the men of reason ' Wesley fixes his attention on ' the men of religion.' He describes them as those who know the power of faith and are no strangers to that inward, vital religion, ' the mind that was in Christ, righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' The criticisms of such men he welcomed. He says, ' I would be glad to learn if we have " erred from the faith " or walked contrary to " the truth as it is in Jesus." ' He declares his readiness to do away with that which was amiss and supply that which was wanting in his teaching and methods of work, so that ' we all may come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' With his usual fairness and exactness he states the current objections to the Methodists and answers them. By all means he strives to win and retain the goodwill of ' the men of religion ' throughout the country.

It will be of service if we glance at some of the objections which religious people, especially those of the Church of England, made to Wesley's teaching in the first half of the eighteenth century. It was affirmed that the Methodist preachers taught that men may live without sin ; that sinners were saved by faith ; and that it was possible to be assured of the forgiveness of sins. The objectors said that such teaching ' encouraged sinners.' Wesley takes up point after point ;

corrects imperfect definitions and the inevitable mistakes of hearsay evidence; then he proves by quotations from the Scriptures, the Articles, and the Homilies of the Church of England that his teaching was in harmony with the word of God and the standards of the Church. In that day few people were acquainted with the contents of the Articles and the Homilies, and the readers of this section of the *Appeal* must have doubted the accuracy of Wesley's statements. We who live in a more illuminated age know that his defence is built on the impregnable rock of fact.

After answering objections to his doctrinal teaching Wesley proceeds to discuss matters full of personal interest. It was commonly asserted that the Wesleys made religion 'a cloak for covetousness'; that they were 'only Papists in disguise'; and that they were 'undermining and destroying the Church.' Wesley examines and refutes all these allegations. He says:

> This only we confess, that we preach inward salvation, now attainable by faith. And for preaching this (for no other crime was then so much as pretended) we were forbid to preach any more in those churches, where, till then, we were gladly received. This is a notorious fact. Being thus hindered from preaching in the places we should first have chosen, we now declare 'the grace of God which bringeth salvation' in all places of His dominion; as well knowing that God dwelleth not only in temples made with hands. This is the real, and it is the only real, ground of complaint against us. And this we avow before all mankind, we do preach this salvation by faith. And not being suffered to preach it in the usual places, we declare it wherever a door is opened, either on a mountain, or a plain, or by a riverside (for all which we conceive we have sufficient precedent), or in prison, or, as it were, in the house of Justus, or the school of one Tyrannus. We dare not refrain. 'A dispensation of the gospel is committed to me; and woe is me if I preach not the gospel.' Here we allow the fact but deny the guilt, but in every other point alleged we deny the fact, and call upon the world to prove it if they can.[1]

Wesley's desire to conciliate his antagonists is evidenced by the elaborate answer he gives to the accusation that he made religion 'a cloak for covetousness.' He might have passed by the charge as being beneath contempt, but he was very sensitive on all points that touched his personal honour. In addition, he was aware that such a charge caught the ear of the multitude, and would provide food for illimitable gossip.

[1] Wesley's *Works*, viii., 28, 8vo ed.

His painstaking refutation of the rumour that he was making much money by his preaching is not without its compensation. It gives us an insight into the system of early Methodist finance, and shows us the important part which laymen took in the collection and distribution of the moneys contributed by the Societies; above all, it casts a beautiful light on the spirit and practice of the great evangelist. With cheerfulness he bore innumerable burdens of financial obligation for the Methodist people, lived a life of constant self-denial; and, taking up his cross daily, followed his Lord.

Wesley, in his *Appeal*, declines to waste time in confuting the senseless and shameless accusation that he was a Papist. He thinks it enough to say that daily and hourly he was preaching that very doctrine which is so solemnly anathematized by the Church of Rome—the doctrine of salvation by faith. When we remember the chaotic state of the theological knowledge of many of the clergymen and of most of the people of that day we regret that he did not devote a few sentences of lucid exposition to this topic. The delusion that the doctrine of justification by faith was a Popish doctrine was widespread, and he was soon to find that preposterous charges have a peculiar charm for the multitude.

The charge that occupied Wesley's chief attention was that he was secretly undermining, if not openly destroying, the Church. He met it in his usual manner, insisting on the clear definition of the terms used in controversy. He asks, 'What do you mean by the Church?' Instead of reproducing the vague definitions of others, he answers his own question by quoting and adopting the definition contained in the Nineteenth Article of the Church of England. He says that the essence of a visible Church is that it is a company of faithful, that is, of believing people; and its properties are that in it the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly administered. In reply to the further question, 'What is the Church of England?' he says, 'What is it, indeed, but the faithful people, the true believers in England? It is true, if these are scattered abroad they come under another consideration. But when they are visibly joined, by assembling together to hear the pure word of God, and drink of one cup, they are then properly the visible Church of England.' Having laid down his premises he asks, 'How do we undermine or destroy

the Church—the provincial, visible Church of England?' Reverting to the Nineteenth Article, he says that 'it mentions three things as essential to a visible Church. First, living faith; without which, indeed, there can be no Church at all, neither visible nor invisible. Secondly, preaching, and consequently hearing, the pure word of God, else that faith would languish and die. And, thirdly, the administration of the sacraments, the ordinary means whereby God increaseth faith.' Then once more he asks, 'In which of these points do we undermine or destroy the Church?'[1]

Wesley's intimate knowledge of the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England armed him with weapons that made him invincible in the conflict with his accusers. Laying special stress on the doctrine of salvation by faith, he showed that his preaching was in harmony with the sermon, in the Homilies, on 'The Salvation of Mankind by only Christ our Saviour from Sin and Death Everlasting,' and with the 'Short Declaration of the True, Lively, and Christian Faith.' The truth of his contention will now be admitted by all who have studied the Homilies. He had an easy task when he proceeded to show that in the matters of preaching 'the pure word of God' and the administration of the sacraments his mission to the neglected masses had been no hindrance to the Church of England. He pointed to the congregations that thronged the churches in London, Bristol, and Newcastle, and to the crowds of communicants that assembled in them when the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was administered. In great part these crowds consisted of the members of the United Societies who, according to their 'rules,' were expected to evidence their desire of salvation by attending upon all the ordinances of God, such as the public worship of God, the ministry of the word, either read or expounded, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

We have only indicated some of the topics touched by Wesley in his *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, and our selection has been guided by their bearing on Wesley's future course. But for a moment we forget the onward-going way as we listen to his description of the work that had been accomplished in England in four short years. The paragraph glows, and still warms the heart.

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 331–333.

Behold the day of the Lord is come! He is again visiting and redeeming His people. Having eyes, see ye not? Having ears, do ye not hear, neither understand with your hearts? At this hour the Lord is rolling away our reproach. Already His standard is set up. His Spirit is poured forth on the outcasts of men, and His love shed abroad in their hearts. Love of all mankind, meekness, gentleness, humbleness of mind, holy and heavenly affections, do take place of hate, anger, pride, revenge, and vile or vain affections. Hence, wherever the power of the Lord spreads springs outward religion in all its forms. The houses of God are filled; the table of the Lord is thronged on every side; and those who thus show their love of God show they love their neighbour also, by being careful to maintain good works by doing all manner of good, as they have time, to all men. They are likewise careful to abstain from all evil. Cursing, Sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, with all other (however fashionable) works of the devil, are not once named among them. All this is plain, demonstrable fact. For this also is not done in a corner. Now, do you acknowledge the day of your visitation? Do you bless God and rejoice therein? . . . Unto you whom God hath chosen out of the world I say, Ye are our brethren, and of our father's house; it behoveth you, in whatsoever manner ye are able, 'to strengthen our hands in God.' And this ye are all able to do—to wish us good luck in the name of the Lord, and to pray continually that none of 'these things may move us,' and that we may not count our lives dear unto ourselves, so that we may finish our course with joy, and the ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus.[1]

With the words of the *Appeal* sounding in our ears we will rejoin the travellers on their way to Cornwall. In the evening of the day he set out from Bristol Wesley preached at Taunton Cross. On Sunday, August 28, he attended the services in Exeter Cathedral, and in the evening went to the Castle and preached to a congregation consisting, as some thought, of half of the grown persons in the city. He says, 'It was an awful sight. So vast a congregation in that solemn amphitheatre! And all silent and still, while I explained at large, and enforced, that glorious truth, "Happy are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." ' The crowd dispersed, and, ever intent on doing good, he went to the prison cell in which a clergyman was lying under sentence of death. He made no impression on him. Then he visited a lad who was to die the next day, and found him of quite another spirit. He was deeply affected while Wesley was speaking to him, and yet more during the prayer. When his kindly visitor

[1] *Works*, viii., 41, 42, 8vo ed.

turned to leave him the lad broke out into a bitter cry. Recording the event, Wesley says, ' Who knows but he might be heard by Him that made him ? '

The next day Wesley and his companions left Exeter, and set out for St. Ives. The little company had been increased by the addition of William Shepherd. John Nelson and John Downes had only one horse between them. They had to adopt the ' ride and tie ' method, but they were the first to reach Bodmin. Wesley and Shepherd lost their way. We must put aside modern ideas of cross-country routes when following the track of travellers in Cornwall in the eighteenth century. It is difficult to persuade ourselves that the best way to reach St. Ives from Exeter is to go round by Launceston and Bodmin ; but, if we had a road-map of that period before us, we should see the reason for such a *détour*. There was a fairly good road to Launceston, but, after that town was passed, it was easy to go astray. About sunset Wesley and his companion found themselves in the middle of a far-stretching, pathless moor. As the evening shades prevailed they had to confess they were ' quite out of the way.' The silence oppressed them. Then there came on the wind the sound as of a church bell. They listened, turned to the left, and rode to Bodmin. The next day, passing through Gwennap, they reached St. Ives in the evening, and Wesley preached in the room, which was crowded both within and without. There was no disturbance ; all were quiet and attentive.

Sitting in the room of his lodging the following morning John Wesley was greeted with ' a ditty ' sung under his window. Its authoress was ' a gentlewoman of St. Ives.' Its claims to lyrical perfection cannot be maintained, but in many parts of the country it became a rousing anti-Methodist war-song. This was its burden :

> Charles Wesley is come to town
> To try if he can pull the churches down.

John Wesley's visit to Cornwall lasted for about three weeks. As we follow him in his preaching-tours we understand more clearly the value of the previous pioneer work of Charles Wesley. He had visited towns and villages in a large area in which Societies had been formed. As we glance over

that area we discern the outlines of the first Cornish 'round' or 'circuit.' Pursuing his usual policy, John Wesley, with one exception, refrained from 'breaking up new ground'; he devoted himself to the work of 'confirming the disciples,' and adding to their number by preaching the gospel to the people in the places visited by his brother. If we accompany him we shall become acquainted with the original Cornish 'circuit.' At its head stood St. Ives. In that town there was a Society numbering about one hundred and twenty persons, nearly a hundred of whom had 'found peace with God.' In recording the fact, Wesley adds, 'Such is the blessing of being persecuted for righteousness' sake.' In the morning of Wednesday, August 31, he met the Society, and spoke severally to the members. Then he went to church. On his way there a large company at the market-place welcomed him and his companions with derisive cheers. He was amused at their 'harmless wit.' In the evening he preached in the room. After the service many began to be turbulent, but broad-shouldered John Nelson went into the midst of them, 'spoke a little to the loudest, who answered not again but went quietly away.' John Nelson's influence was quickly felt in St. Ives. On arriving in the town he had sought and found work as a stone-mason, in which craft he excelled. By so doing he avoided the charge of being 'a vagrant,' got some money to sustain himself, and made the acquaintance and won the esteem of the working men of the town. In many parts of the country his work as a mason attracted attention. It was not only full of conscience, but it revealed exceptional artistic taste and power of execution. As the production of a Christian man it was 'a sermon in stones.'

The Society at St. Ives was after Wesley's own heart. One service he held in the room was memorable. He tells us that the dread of God fell on the congregation while he was speaking so that he could hardly utter a word. This overwhelming sense of the presence of God was especially felt in prayer, wherein he was so carried out as scarce ever before in his life. On another occasion we note that two women and a young man from Penzance were present at a Society meeting. They were deeply affected, and were led into the clear light of the love of God. During his visit to the town the services in St. Ives were little disturbed. On Monday, September 19, he

was informed that the rabble intended to make a general assault on the Methodists, but the 'honest Presbyterian' Mayor once more intervened. He requested one of the Aldermen to go to the room. He went and stayed the whole time of the service, so that there was quietness while Wesley explained 'None is like unto the God of Jeshurun.'

St. Ives is a gateway into West Cornwall, a land irresistibly attractive to the lovers of 'the blue distances' of time and space. The waysides and moors near Morvah, Zennor, and St. Just are marked with the monuments of a wellnigh indecipherable past. Their origin and meaning provoke the constant disputes of antiquaries, but, the haze of remote centuries enshrouds them. If the traveller's love of distance is chiefly satisfied by the amplitudes of sea and sky, and the sweep of far horizons, he can walk along the coast. Reaching the little village of Sennen, let him stand on the cliffs above the Land's End and look across the innumerable glittering waves of the Atlantic. Wherever he may wander in the great spaces of West Cornwall he will find something that will create in him that silence of the spirit which tells us that we are in the presence of mystery and infinite majesty.

Morvah, Zennor, St. Just, and Sennen are names familiar to those who know the story of the earliest Methodist mission to Cornwall. They were easily reached from St. Ives, and form a group of towns and villages which lie within the inner circle visited by Charles and John Wesley and the lay preachers who helped them. We must now follow the footsteps of John Wesley. He went to Cornwall with great expectations, but for a time he found that they must be slightly modified. It was a relief to find that St. Ives was not the scene of tempest and outrage which he expected. The storm had lulled. He rejoiced in that fact, being aware that rest as well as persecution leads to the progress of the Church. On the other hand, he seems at first to have been disappointed with the apparently slight impression his own preaching produced in some of the places he visited. Deep conviction of sin, clear assurance of pardon, the peace of God passing understanding, the joy of the Lord, intense earnestness, the love of holiness, the practice of Christian fellowship, zeal for the salvation of others, all these signs of a living faith he longed to see. His *Journal* contains much that makes us

understand his moods of disappointment. But he frequently found that he had to modify his disappointments as well as his high expectations. Let us take the case of Morvah. On Friday, September 2, he went there, preached, and says, 'I observed an earnest, stupid attention in my hearers, many of whom appeared to have good desires; but I did not find one who was convinced of sin, much less who knew the pardoning love of God.' The next Tuesday he went again. His record shows that he was conscious that the 'stupidity' of which he had complained might not be altogether the fault of the people. He confesses that he could not find the way into their hearts although 'they were earnest to hear what they understood not.' On Sunday, September 11, the scene changed. He preached to a large congregation gathered together on the north side of Morvah Church. He found 'the way into their hearts,' and rejoiced in the presence of the Spirit of the great King. The following Sunday he preached there again to the largest congregation he had seen in Cornwall. Afterwards he met the Society, and found it consisted of more than a hundred members. He wonders how many would endure to the end, but it is clear that his former feeling of disappointment had vanished.

During his visit to Cornwall Sunday was John Wesley's great field-day. Those who know the neighbourhood will be impressed by the amount of work he crowded into a few hours. We will take one example. On Saturday, September 10, he went to St. Just and attended the church service in the afternoon. Then, standing at the cross at the south-west corner of the churchyard, he preached to about a thousand people, who all behaved in a quiet and serious manner. He then went to Sennen, and spoke to a little congregation of 'old, grey-headed men.' On Sunday morning he held an early service at Sennen. The people began to assemble between three and four o'clock. After four o'clock he preached. At the close of the service he and his companions went down, as far as they could go safely, 'toward the point of the rocks at the Land's End.' Then he set out for St. Just, and between eight and nine o'clock preached on the green plain near the town to the largest congregation, he was informed, that had ever been seen there. He says, 'The people trembled and were still. I had not known such an hour before in Cornwall.' Soon after

one o'clock he had such another congregation at Morvah. At about five o'clock he preached at Zennor. John Nelson had attended the service in the church there the previous Sunday and had heard the clergyman describe the Methodists as 'a people who hold that damnable Popish doctrine of justification by faith.' The preacher, therefore, begged the congregation not to hear them. After the service on that day John Nelson went about two hundred yards from the church, got upon a rock, began to sing a hymn, and the people flocked to hear him. He showed them 'what was the faith of the gospel and what the faith of the Church of Rome.' The Zennor clergyman's knowledge of human nature was superficial. He did not understand that such warnings as he had given provoke curiosity and increase crowds. After the service at Zennor Wesley went to St. Ives, met the Society, and closed the day with them, 'praising God with joyful lips.'

The lay preachers who were with Wesley followed up his work. Their assistance was invaluable; without it his success would have been jeopardized. Their presence also set him free to visit the places where Charles Wesley had preached in the 'outer circle.' John Nelson, who knew 'the way into the hearts of the people,' was his frequent companion in these evangelizing tours. In Wesley's *Journal* we find records of services held on the commons near Illogan and Gwennap; on Treswithen Downs, Kenneggy Downs, and St. Hilary Downs. Some of the congregations were small, but at his last service at Treswithen Downs between two and three thousand persons were present. When he reached Gwennap, in the evening of the same day, the plain was covered from end to end. Nearly ten thousand people had assembled, and he preached to them until it was so dark that they could scarce see one another. His record is, 'There was on all sides the deepest attention, none speaking, stirring, or scarce looking aside. Surely here, though in a temple not made with hands, was God worshipped in "the beauty of holiness."' The next morning he was wakened, between three and four o'clock, by a large company of 'tinners,' who, fearing they should be too late, had gathered round the house, and were singing and praising God. At five he preached to them on 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' and 'they all devoured the word.' Then he said farewell to them, strongly desiring to see them

again. The Cornish enthusiasm touched him; it was a prophecy of coming days of abundant success.

Carefully extending and solidifying the work that had been begun by the labours of others, John Wesley seized the opportunity of commencing a mission in a place of romantic interest. When in St. Ives he felt 'a great desire to go and publish the love of God our Saviour, if it were but for one day, in the Isles of Scilly.' Knowing his wish, three of the St. Ives members came to him in the evening of September 12 and offered to carry him there if he could procure the Mayor's boat, which, they said, was the best sailer of any in the town. He sent a message to the Mayor, who immediately complied with his request. The next morning he, with John Nelson and William Shepherd, went on board the fishing-boat. It was manned by three men and a pilot. When they got away from the shelter of the land the waves began 'to swell and hang over their heads.' Wesley knew the Atlantic, and must have been reminded of a time when stormy weather made him afraid; but those days were gone. He encouraged his companions, and all joined together in singing lustily and with a good courage:

When passing through the watery deep,
I ask in faith His promised aid;
The waves an awful distance keep,
And shrink from my devoted head;
Fearless, their violence I dare;
They cannot harm, for God is here.

We wonder if he thought of the singing of the Moravians in the storm that burst on the *Simmonds* and sent her staggering on her way to almost certain destruction. What a journey in spiritual experience he had travelled since that hour!

The boat reached St. Mary's in safety. Wesley, with his companions, waited, first of all, on the Governor, Lord Godolphin, and presented him with a newspaper, probably the *Sherborne Mercury*. In addition, Wesley asked him to accept a copy of the *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*. The interview with the Governor seems to have been satisfactory. Wesley then waited on the clergyman and requested his permission to preach in his church, but found that he was unwilling to grant it, so he took his stand in

the street of the little town in the evening, and was soon surrounded by many soldiers, sailors, and workmen who were engaged in building the fortifications intended for the defence of the island in times of war. He preached to ' almost all the town.' The people listened so attentively that he scarce knew how to conclude. After the sermon he distributed among them ' some little books and hymns,' which they were so eager to receive that they were ready to tear both them and him to pieces. At five the next morning he preached again. Later in the day he talked with many in private, and distributed both to them and others between two and three hundred hymns and little books. Then, before ten o'clock, he and his companions went on board the boat and set sail for St. Ives. The wind was strong and dead ahead. The pilot told them they would have good luck if they reached the land ; ' but,' says Wesley, ' he knew not Him whom the winds and seas obey. Soon after three we were even with the Land's End, and about nine we reached St. Ives.'

Leaving Nelson to carry on the work, Wesley set out on his return to Bristol. He reached Launceston on September 21. The next day he passed through Okehampton and rode through the Dartmoor country. The way to Exeter runs along the northern edge of the mass of mountain-land that has such irresistible attraction for the antiquary, the hill-climber, and the lover of bold and rugged scenery. Wesley entered a widening valley and approached a village which lies right under the steepest side of Cosdon. The modern traveller is attracted by its Lady well and wayside cross, and doubtless Wesley glanced at them as he rode along. He was approaching the village of Sticklepath. As he came to the street he was stopped by a man who asked him abruptly, ' Is not thy name John Wesley ? ' They conversed together, and two or three others came up and told him he must stop there. He did so, and before they had spoken many words ' their souls took acquaintance with each other.' The men belonged to a colony of Quakers who had migrated from Exeter early in the eighteenth century. Speaking of those who stopped him in the street he says, ' I found they were called Quakers, but that hurt not me, seeing the love of God was in their hearts.' On subsequent journeys he and Charles Wesley often stayed at the little village and preached to the people there. On this

occasion John Wesley was pressing on to Exeter, where he preached in the Castle in the evening, and on the following morning.[1]

On his way from Exeter to Taunton Wesley rode round by Axminster. He had been requested to visit the town by a few of the inhabitants who feared God, and had been joined together in Christian fellowship for some years. Methodism was introduced into Axminster by a soldier named Payne.[2] It seems to be one of the numerous cases illustrating the fact that soldiers were often Methodist pioneers ; and, in addition, it reminds us of the work of the private individual in the evangelization of the country in the years of the great Revival. Wesley met the Society, and exhorted them ' so to seek after the power as not to despise the form of godliness.' Then he rode to Taunton, where he found a little company of Bristol Methodists who had come to welcome him. He stayed at the Three Cups Inn, and attempted to preach in the yard, but he had scarce named his text when the Mayor-elect of the town made so much noise and uproar that he thought it best to ' give him the ground.' Followed by many people, he went into a large room and there preached unto them Jesus. In the evening of September 24 he ended his tour and arrived safely at Bristol.

[1] In the cemetery at Sticklepath there is a stone under a yew-tree which perpetuates the memory of the kindness of the Quakers shown to John Wesley on this and other occasions. It bears the appropriate text, ' Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.'

[2] See *Journal*, iii., 95, *note*.

XI

JOHN WESLEY IN WEDNESBURY

As a general rule John Wesley never commenced preaching in a place without seeing his way to continue his work there. He had slight faith in the effectiveness of a fugitive ministry. His journeys to and from Cornwall had opened up a new country to him, and he had been impressed with the needs of the towns and villages through which he had passed. Exeter was white unto the harvest; so were Sticklepath and Axminster. It was fortunate for him that John Nelson had been his companion in his evangelizing tour. Nelson stayed in West Cornwall for a fortnight after Wesley had departed. During that time he received a letter from Wesley desiring him to call at three different places and preach there on his way to Bristol. He did so, and visited Sticklepath, Exeter, and Axminster, meeting with much success. In Bristol he remained for ten days, and rejoiced in the conversion of sinners. Then he set out for the north, preaching at Stroud and several other towns on his way to Wednesbury. Arriving there, he comforted and strengthened the persecuted Society. He preached several times in an open yard to very large congregations. Some of 'the mobbers' came to hear him; he says they all behaved well. After spending a few days in the town he set out for Nottingham and stayed two days there. When preaching at the cross there was a disturbance; he faced it and it subsided. As soon as he had done preaching a sergeant of the army came to him. With tears in his eyes he said to Nelson, 'In the presence of God and all this people I beg your pardon; for I came on purpose to mob you; but when I could get no one to assist me I stood to hear you, and am convinced of the deplorable state my soul is in, and I believe you are a servant of the living God.' He then embraced the preacher and went away weeping. It was in this manner that John Nelson proved himself a true 'assistant' and 'helper' of the

Wesleys. He was a master-worker; a builder-up of recently founded Societies in many parts of England.

In his *Journal* John Nelson gives us a picture of his home-coming. It touches the heart by its simple pathos. We will describe it in his own words. He says:

> When I got home I found my wife much better, though never likely to recover her former strength, owing to the persecution she met with at Wakefield when Mr. Larwood was mobbed there. After they had abused him, she, with some women, set out for Birstall. A mob followed them into the fields. When they overtook them she turned about and spake to them; upon which all the men returned without touching them; but the women followed them till they came to a gate, where they stopped them; they damned her, saying, "You are Nelson's wife, and here you shall die." They saw she was big with child, yet beat her on the body so cruelly that they killed the child in her womb; and she went home and miscarried directly. This treatment she had reason to remember to her life's end; but God more than made it up to her by filling her with peace and love.

After staying in Bristol for a day or two John Wesley went to Wales to visit some of the Societies. This visit is noteworthy because, during it, he renewed his acquaintance with Mr. Marmaduke Gwynne, staying with him at Garth, about sixteen miles from Brecon. Mr. Gwynne was a man of 'family and fortune,' well known throughout the county of Brecknock. When Howell Harris began his itinerant work in Wales Mr. Gwynne determined, as a magistrate, to interfere and stop him. He left home intending to send Harris to prison, but with uncommon prudence resolved to hear him before he acted. He had taken the Riot Act with him, but as he listened to Harris he was so impressed by his apostolic zeal and affection, and by the purity of his doctrine, that he went up to him, shook him by the hand, told him how much he had been misled by slanderous reports, avowed his intention of committing him had those reports been true, asked his pardon, and, to the amazement of the assembly, entreated him to accompany him to Garth to supper. Mr. Gwynne is described as a man of fine spirit, pious, kind to his tenantry, beneficent to the poor, and exemplary in all the relations of life. His great influence in the county did much to protect the Methodists of Brecknock from persecution.[1]

[1] See *note* in John Wesley's *Journal*, iii., 96.

Returning from Wales, Wesley spent several days in Bristol examining the Society. He had to put many away; but, after the exercise of strict discipline, seven hundred members remained. At Kingswood he found only a few things to reprove. In Bristol he had one exceptionally pleasant experience. The 'public debt,' which had weighed on the Society for some time, had been attacked with success. In the several classes collections had been made for its removal; and, when he met the stewards and leaders, he found that the voluntary offerings of the people sufficed to discharge it.

When Wesley was in Wales he received a circumstantial account of the riots in Wednesbury and the neighbourhood. The persecution of the Methodists had been renewed with great violence. The influence of the clergy and the magistrates was steadily exerted on the side of disorder. An illustration of the attitude of the magistrates is furnished by a document dated October 12, 1743. It is addressed 'To all High Constables, Petty Constables, and other of His Majesty's Peace Officers,' within the county of Staffordshire, and 'particularly to the Constable of Tipton, near Walsall.' It is signed by two justices—J. Lane and W. Persehouse. Its contents were as follows: 'Whereas we, His Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the said county of Stafford, have received information that several disorderly persons, styling themselves Methodist preachers, go about raising routs and riots, to the great damage of His Majesty's liege people and against the peace of our Sovereign Lord the King: These are, in His Majesty's name, to command you and every one of you, within your respective districts, to make diligent search after the said Methodist preachers, and to bring him or them before some of us, his said Majesty's Justices of the Peace, to be examined concerning their unlawful doings.'[1]

Wesley felt that the time had come when he ought to go to Wednesbury and see for himself what was happening there. Leaving Bristol on Thursday, October 20, he preached to a small, attentive congregation in Birmingham, and then rode to Wednesbury. At midday he took his stand on a horse-block belonging to a malthouse near the middle of the town, and preached to a far larger congregation than he expected;

[1] A copy of this document is inserted in John Wesley's *Journal*. He describes it as a curiosity as great in its kind as was ever yet seen in England. *Journal*, iii., 103.

and no one offered to molest him or those who stood around him. The calm only preluded the storm. In the afternoon the mob beset Francis Ward's house, where Wesley was quietly waiting. After a time it dispersed, without doing any mischief. About five the mob returned, and surrounded the house in still greater numbers. The cry of one and all was, 'Bring out the minister; we will have the minister!' The captain of the mob and one or two of the most angry of his companions were brought into the house. Wesley spoke to them, and his extraordinary personal influence was exercised on them; the lions became like lambs. Wesley then went out into the midst of the people. The scenes of that day are so important that we must record them in his own words.

As soon as I was in the midst of them I called for a chair, and, standing up, asked, 'What do any of you want with me?' Some said, 'We want you to go with us to the Justice.' I replied, 'That I will with all my heart.' I then spoke a few words, which God applied, so that they cried out with might and main, 'The gentleman is an honest gentleman, and we will spill our blood in his defence.' I asked, 'Shall we go to the justice to-night or in the morning?' Most of them cried, 'To-night, to-night,' on which I went before, and two or three hundred followed, the rest returning whence they came.

The night came on before we had walked a mile, together with heavy rain. However, on we went to Bentley Hall, two miles from Wednesbury. One or two ran before to tell Mr. Lane they had brought Mr. Wesley before his Worship. Mr. Lane replied, 'What have I to do with Mr. Wesley? Go and carry him back again.' By this time the main body came up and began knocking at the door. A servant told them Mr. Lane was in bed. His son followed and asked what was the matter. One replied, 'Why, an't please you, they sing psalms all day; nay, and make folks rise at five in the morning. And what would your Worship advise us to do?' 'To go home,' said Mr. Lane, 'and be quiet.'

Here they were at full stop, till one advised to go to Justice Persehouse at Walsall. All agreed to this; so we hastened on, and about seven came to his house. But Mr. Persehouse likewise sent word that he was in bed. Now they were at a stand again; but at last they all thought it the wisest course to make the best of their way home. About fifty of them undertook to convoy me. But we had not gone a hundred yards when the mob of Walsall came, pouring in like a flood, and bore down all before them. The Darlaston mob made what defence they could, but they were weary, as well as outnumbered; so that in a short time, many being knocked down, the rest ran away and left me in their hands.

To attempt speaking was vain, for the noise on every side was like the roaring of the sea. So they dragged me along till we came to the town, where, seeing the door of a large house open, I attempted to go

in; but a man, catching me by the hair, pulled me back into the middle of the mob. They made no more stop till they had carried me through the main street, from one end of the town to the other. I continued speaking all the time to those within hearing, feeling no pain or weariness. At the west end of the town, seeing a door half-open, I made toward it, and would have gone in, but a gentleman in the shop would not suffer me, saying they would pull the house down to the ground. However, I stood at the door and asked, 'Are you willing to hear me speak?' Many cried out, 'No, no! Knock his brains out; down with him; kill him at once.' Others said, 'Nay, but we will hear him first.' I began asking, 'What evil have I done? Which of you all have I wronged in word or deed?' and continued speaking for about a quarter of an hour, till my voice suddenly failed. Then the floods began to lift up their voice again, many crying out, 'Bring him away! Bring him away!'

In the meantime my strength and my voice returned, and I broke out aloud in prayer. And now the man who just before headed the mob turned and said, 'Sir, I will spend my life for you; follow me, and not one soul here shall touch a hair of your head.' Two or three of his fellows confirmed his words, and got close to me immediately. At the same time the gentleman in the shop cried out, 'For shame, for shame! Let him go.' An honest butcher, who was a little farther off, said it was a shame they should do thus, and pulled back four or five, one after another, who were running the most fiercely. The people then, as if it had been by common consent, fell back to the right and left, while those three or four men took me between them and carried me through them all. But on the bridge the mob rallied again. We therefore went on one side over the mill-dam, and thence through the meadows, till, a little before ten, God brought me safe to Wednesbury, having lost only one flap of my waistcoat and a little skin from one of my hands.

I never saw such a chain of providences before; so many convincing proofs that the hand of God is on every person and thing, overruling all as it seemeth Him good.

The poor woman of Darlaston who had headed that mob, and sworn that none should touch me, when she saw her followers give way ran into the thickest of the throng and knocked down three or four men, one after another. But many assaulting her at once, she was soon overpowered, and had probably been killed in a few minutes (three men keeping her down and beating her with all their might), had not a man called to one of them, 'Hold, Tom, hold!' 'Who is there?' said Tom. 'What, honest Munchin? Nay, then, let her go.' So they held their hand, and let her get up and crawl home as well as she could.[1]

From the beginning to the end I found the same presence of mind as if I had been sitting in my own study. But I took no thought for one moment before another; only once it came into my mind that if they should throw me into the river, it would spoil the papers that were in

[1] 'Honest Munchin's' name was George Clifton. After the riot he became a Methodist, well known and still remembered in the Black Country.

my pocket. For myself, I did not doubt that I should swim across, having but a thin coat and a light pair of boots.

The circumstances which follow I thought were particularly remarkable: (1) That many endeavoured to throw me down while we were going downhill on a slippery path to the town, as well judging that if I was once on the ground I should hardly rise any more. But I made no stumble at all, nor the least slide until I was entirely out of their hands. (2) That although many strove to lay hold on my collar or clothes, to pull me down, they could not fasten at all; only one got fast hold of the flap of my waistcoat, which was soon left in his hand; the other flap, in the pocket of which was a bank-note, was torn but half off. (3) That a lusty man just behind struck at me several times with a large oaken stick; with which, if he had struck me once on the back part of my head, it would have saved him all further trouble. But every time the blow was turned aside, I know not how; for I could not move to the right hand or left. (4) That another came rushing through the press, and, raising his arm to strike, on a sudden let it drop, and only stroked my head, saying, 'What soft hair he has!' (5) That I stopped exactly at the Mayor's door, as if I had known it (which the mob doubtless thought I did), and found him standing in the shop, which gave the first check to the madness of the people. (6) That the very first men whose hearts were turned were the heroes of the town, the captains of the rabble on all occasions, one of them having been a prize-fighter at the bear-garden. (7) That from first to last I heard none give a reviling word, or call me by any opprobrious name whatever; but the cry of one and all was 'The preacher! The preacher! The parson! The minister!' (8) That no creature, at least within my hearing, laid anything to my charge, either true or false; having in the hurry quite forgot to provide themselves with any accusation of any kind. And lastly, that they were as utterly at a loss what they should do with me, none proposing any determinate thing; only, 'Away with him! Kill him at once!' [1]

By how gentle degrees does God prepare us for His will! Two years ago a piece of brick grazed my shoulders. It was a year after that the stone struck me between the eyes. Last month I received one blow, and this evening two; one before we came into the town, and one after we were gone out; but both were as nothing; for though one man struck me on the breast with all his might, and the other on the mouth with such a force that the blood gushed out immediately, I felt no more pain from either of the blows than if they had touched me with a straw.

It ought not to be forgotten that, when the rest of the Society made all haste to escape for their lives, four only would not stir—William Sitch, Edward Slater, John Griffiths, and Joan Parks; these kept with me, resolving to live or die together; and none of them received one blow but William Sitch, who held me by the arm from one end of the town to the other. He was then dragged away and knocked down, but he

[1] In his *Modern Christianity Exemplified at Wednesbury* Wesley says that one or two screamed out, 'Crucify the dog; crucify him!' (*Works*, xiii., 161, 8vo ed.)

soon rose and got to me again. I afterwards asked him what he expected when the mob came upon us. He said, 'To die for Him who had died for us.' And he felt no hurry or fear, but calmly waited till God should require his soul of him.

I asked Joan Parks if she was not afraid when they tore her from me. She said, 'No; no more than I am now. I could trust God for you as well as for myself. From the beginning I had a full persuasion that God would deliver you. I knew not how, but I left that to Him, and was as sure as if it were already done.' I asked if the report was true that she had fought for me. She said, 'No; I knew God would fight for His children.' And shall these souls perish at the last?

When I came back to Francis Ward's I found many of our brethren waiting upon God. Many also whom I never had seen came to rejoice with us. And the next morning, as I rode through the town on my way to Nottingham, every one I met expressed such a cordial affection that I could scarce believe what I saw and heard.[1]

It is impossible to read this account of Wesley's perilous adventures without admiring and envying his Christian heroism. We follow him step by step with intense interest. The strain on our sympathy is great. We welcome the relief that comes from the touch of humour afforded by the conduct of the two justices who signed the document from which we have quoted. When, in accordance with their commands, the Methodist preacher was brought to them 'to be examined concerning his unlawful doings,' each of them found refuge in bed. We are thankful that Wesley recorded the names of those who defended him with a courage equal to his own. The Methodist 'Roll of Honour' is crowded with glorious names; but it will be long before we forget the heroes and heroines of Wednesbury. On his way to Nottingham John Wesley must have recalled the dangers and mercies of the previous day. When he arrived in Nottingham he met his brother. Charles Wesley stared at him with astonishment. He says, 'My brother came delivered out of the mouth of the lion. He *looked* like a soldier of Christ; his clothes were torn to tatters. . . . But his work is not finished, or he had now been with the souls under the altar.'[2]

John Wesley's visit to Wednesbury was not without good results. One of his clerical persecutors, the minister of Darlaston, sent him word that he would join with him in any measures to punish the rioters. He confessed that the meek behaviour of the Methodists, and their constancy in suffering,

[1] *Journal*, iii., 98–103. [2] C. Wesley's *Journal*, i., 337.

convinced him the counsel was of God; and he declared that he wished that all the people of his parish were Methodists. It is noticeable that the name of Mr. Egginton, the minister of Wednesbury, does not appear in connexion with the assault on John Wesley. The explanation may be that he was nearing the close of his career. He died towards the end of December, 1743.[1]

After meeting his brother in Nottingham Charles Wesley set out on his journey to Bristol. When he reached Birmingham he met some of the Wednesbury members, who gave him particulars of the persecution. They pressed him to come to Wednesbury and preach in the midst of the town. In conversation with his brother in Nottingham the possibility of such a request had been considered, and it had been decided that if he were asked to go to Wednesbury he should consent. It must be noted that one of the ingenious methods employed by the leaders of the mob was to go from house to house in a town carrying with them a paper which had been prepared by a clergyman. The people visited were asked to sign it. It contained a declaration that they would cease from following the Methodist preachers. If they refused they were marked as persons to be rabbled, and their houses destroyed. It was no wonder that the Wesleys questioned the advisability of preaching in Wednesbury unless the Methodists of that town urged them to do so. They both possessed unflinching courage; they were prepared to face the greatest personal dangers; but they were quick to remember that other people might be injured if they persisted in visiting the town. Yielding to the pressure put upon him, Charles Wesley went to Wednesbury, staying at the house of Francis Ward. Several of the members of the Society assembled to meet him. They stood fast in one mind and spirit, in nothing terrified by their adversaries. Charles Wesley's word to them was, 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit yourselves like men, be strong.' He says that never before was he in so primitive an assembly. They sang praises lustily and with a good courage, and could all set their seal to the truth of our Lord's saying, 'Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake.'

The next morning, like the ancient Christians, they assembled

[1] Mr. W. C. Sheldon informs us that Mr. Egginton was buried on December 30, 1743.

'to sing hymns to Christ as God.' Then, as the day came on, Charles Wesley walked down the town, and preached boldly in the open air. The burden of his discourse was, 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' He tells us that it was a most glorious time, and that his hearers 'longed for the coming of the Lord to confess them before His Father and His holy angels.' Later in the day he met the Society. We can imagine the scene. Two figures come out before us with special distinctness. There was the man whose arm had been broken by the mob; and, near him, was 'Honest Munchin,' who was that day received into the Society 'on trial.' He had been for some time the leader of the mob, and was considered the greatest profligate in the country. But the change had come. After delivering John Wesley he had been 'under the word,' and was filled with 'a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from his sins.' In a talk with him Charles Wesley asked, 'What did you think of my brother?' He replied, 'Think of him! That he is a mon of God; and God was on his side, when so mony of us could not kill one mon.' Having strengthened the brethren Charles Wesley said farewell, mounted his horse, and rode unmolested through the town on his return to Birmingham.

After visiting the north of England John Wesley arrived in London on December 1. He found full employment for some weeks in speaking severally to the members of the Society. After setting many aside, there remained about two thousand two hundred persons over whom he rejoiced. The preaching-services were largely attended. The sacramental services at West Street attracted crowds of communicants.[1] As John Wesley surveyed the events of one of the most remarkable years in the history of early Methodism he must have been convinced that the work he was doing bore the marks of the special approval of divine providence, and declared aloud the will of God.

[1] On November 27, Charles Wesley gave the sacrament to about a thousand members of the Society.

XII

TROUBLOUS TIMES

On Tuesday, January 9, 1744, John Wesley reached Bristol, and on the next day he began to examine the Society. There were influences at work which seriously threatened its prosperity. The mischief which had so much injured the Fetter Lane Society had revealed itself here; 'the plague was begun.' He found many crying out, 'Faith, faith! Believe, believe!' but making little account of the fruits of faith, either of holiness or good works. He firmly confronted the danger, and spent several days in instructing those who had gone astray and led others out of the right path. His work was not in vain. 'They came to themselves, and had a more thorough understanding of the truth as it is in Jesus.' This incident in Bristol at the opening of the year was predictive of serious events which were to follow.

In the midst of his anxieties it must have gladdened the heart of Wesley to receive from the Continent a letter from John Haime, who subsequently joined the ranks of his lay preachers. Haime was a Dorset man, a soldier who had voluntarily enlisted. On June 16, 1743,[1] he fought in the battle of Dettingen. Going into winter quarters, three of the soldiers began to meet together in Christian fellowship. The little band increased until, in May, 1744, it numbered two hundred. Haime commenced to preach, and was assisted by other Methodist soldiers. As Wesley read the account of this work in the army he saw visions of the widening of the boundaries of the Kingdom that is 'ever mighty to prevail.' But his attention was soon fixed on battles nearer home. Once more we must visit Wednesbury, that storm-swept neighbourhood which had been the scene of disgraceful outrage.

In John Wesley's *Journal* an account of the renewed Wednesbury riots appears. It was written by James Jones, a lay preacher who for six years, in the midst of great persecution,

[1] *Old Style.*

did the work of an itinerant evangelist.[1] We will give the substance of his account of the riots. After telling us that, on Monday, January 23, a great mob gathered together at Darlaston, a mile from Wednesbury, and fell upon a few people, he describes the brutal assault on the wife of Joshua Constable, of Darlaston. He then proceeds to set down in chronological order the main incidents of these disgraceful riots.

Monday, January 30.—The mob gathered again, broke into Joshua Constable's house, pulled part of it down, broke some of his goods in pieces, and carried the rest away; particularly all his shop goods, to a considerable value. But, not satisfied with this, they sought for him and his wife, swearing they would knock their brains out. Their little children, meantime, as well as themselves, wandered up and down, no one daring to relieve or take them in, lest they should hazard their own lives.

About a hundred of the mob met together on the Church Hill at Wednesbury, but, hearing some of Wednesbury were resolved to defend themselves, they dispersed for that time.

Wednesday, February 1.—Mr. Charles Wesley came to Birmingham and the next day preached at Wednesbury. The whole congregation was quiet and attentive, nor had we any noise or interruption.[2]

Monday, 6.—I accompanied him part of his way, and in the afternoon came back to Wednesbury. I found the Society met together, and commending themselves to God in prayer, having been informed that many, both at Darlaston and other places, had bound themselves by an oath to come on Shrove Tuesday (the next day) and plunder all the Methodists in Wednesbury.

We continued in prayer till the evening. I desired as many as could to meet me again at eight in the morning. But I had scarce begun to speak when one came running with all speed and told us a large mob was coming into the town and had broke into some houses already. I immediately retired to my father's house, but he did not dare to receive me. Nor did any one else, till at length Henry Parks took me in; whence, early in the morning, I went to Birmingham.

The mob had been gathering all Monday night, and on Tuesday morning they began their work. They assaulted, one after another, all the houses of those who were called Methodists. They first broke all their windows, suffering neither glass, lead, nor frames to remain therein. Then they made their way in; and all the tables, chairs, chests of drawers, with whatever was not easily removable, they dashed in pieces, particularly shop goods, and furniture of every kind.

[1] Charles Atmore says that James Jones was a native of Tipton, and possessed considerable property. In defence of the truth he was 'bold as a lion.' He erected at Tipton Green, at his own expense, the first Methodist chapel in Staffordshire, and for a series of years was 'a father to the Societies in that part of the country.' He died in 1783. *Methodist Memorial*, 225.

[2] On February 2 Charles Wesley walked 'through the blessings and curses of the people' to visit Mr. Egginton's widow. See his *Journal*, i., 345.

What they could not well break, as feather-beds, they cut in pieces and strewed about the room. William Sitch's wife was lying-in, but that was all one; they pulled away her bed too, and cut it in pieces. . . . All this time none offered to resist them. Indeed, most part, both men and women, fled for their lives; only the children stayed, not knowing whither to go.

Wearing apparel, and things that were of value or easily saleable, they carried away, every man loading himself with as much as he could well carry of whatever he liked best.

Some of the gentlemen who had set the mob to work, or threatened to turn away collier or miner out of their service that did not come and do his part, now drew up a paper for those of the Society to sign, importing that they would never invite or receive any Methodist preacher more. On this condition they told them they would stop the mob at once; otherwise they must take what followed.

This they offered to several; but they declared, one and all, 'We have already lost all our goods, and nothing more can follow but the loss of our lives, which we will lose too rather than wrong our consciences.'

On Wednesday the mob divided into two or three companies, one of which went to Aldridge, six miles from Wednesbury, and plundered many houses there as they had done in several other villages. Here also they loaded themselves with clothes and goods of all sorts, as much as they could stand under. They came back through Walsall with their spoils; but the gentlemen of Walsall, being apprised of their coming, raised a body of men, who met them, took what they had away, and laid it up in the Town Hall. Notice was then sent to Aldridge that every man who had been plundered might come and take his own goods.

Mr. Wood, of Wednesbury, likewise told several they should have what could be found of their goods, on condition they would promise not to receive or hear those preachers any more.

On Friday in the afternoon, I went to Birmingham, designing to go to Tipton Green; but, finding the mob were still raging up and down, I returned to Birmingham, and soon after (having as yet no more place in these parts) set out for London.[1]

In 1744 Methodism was swiftly developing into a national movement, and its experiences were influenced and, in some measure, determined by the events transpiring in England. The Societies scattered over the country from London to Wales, and from Newcastle-on-Tyne to Cornwall, were deeply affected by the serious condition of the nation. John Haime's letter reminds us that England was at war. It is a significant fact that during the whole of John Wesley's great mission this

[1] See John Wesley's *Journal*, iii., 117–119. For a full account of these riots see Wesley's pamphlet, *Modern Christianity Exemplified at Wednesbury* (*Works*, xiii., 148–158, 8vo ed.). Charles Wesley's *Journal* should also be consulted. See i., 345–347.

country was either preparing for war, at war, or recovering from the effects of war.[1] In 1744 war was desolating the countries of Europe. Lecky, speaking of that year, says: 'So ended the year 1744, during which a fearful sum of human misery had been inflicted on the world. . . . Tens of thousands of lives had been sacrificed, millions of pounds had been uselessly squandered, all the interests of civilization and industry had been injured or neglected, but it can scarcely be said that a single important result had been achieved. The relative forces of the belligerents at the end of the year were almost the same as they had been at the beginning, and there was yet no sign of the approach of peace.'[2]

In February, as Lecky has shown, England and France, though taking a leading part in the war, had only been engaged in it as auxiliaries; and, though their troops had fought against each other in so many fields, the two countries were still nominally at peace. This state of things was ended in March, when France declared war against England. But before the declaration this country was thrown into a condition of violent excitement by the action of France. Fleury, who had done much to prevent the formal outbreak of war between the two nations, died, his place in the councils of France being taken by Cardinal Tencin. According to Lecky, Tencin was said to have obtained his 'hat' by the friendship of the 'Old Pretender,' the son of James II. The 'Old Pretender' had set up his standard in Scotland in 1715, but his attempt to stir up a rebellion in favour of the House of Stuart was soon suppressed, and he escaped to the Continent. In 1744 Cardinal Tencin resolved to signalize his government by the invasion of England in the interests of the 'Pretender.' He assembled fifteen thousand men at Dunkirk under the command of Marshal Saxe. A powerful fleet sailed from Brest and Rochefort to protect the transports containing the troops, and the 'Young Pretender' arrived from Rome to accompany the expedition. On

[1] Spanish War, Oct. 23, 1739, to April 30, 1748; War with France, March 31, 1744, to April 30, 1748; Seven Years' War, June 9, 1756, to Feb. 10, 1763; War with Spain, Jan. 4, 1762, to Feb. 10, 1763; American War, July 14, 1774, to Nov. 30, 1782; War with France, Feb. 6, 1778, to Jan. 20, 1783; War with Spain, April 17, 1780, to Jan. 20, 1783; War with Holland, Dec. 21, 1780, to Sept. 2, 1783. Wesley died in 1791, when events were preparing for the War of the French Revolution, which began Feb. 1, 1793.

[2] *England in the Eighteenth Century*, ii., 24.

February 15 John Wesley received the news of the intended invasion, and was told that the French were expected to land immediately. About the end of February a French fleet appeared in the Channel. Having sailed across from France without sighting the English ships of war, the commander sent off a quick message to Dunkirk to hasten the embarkation of the French troops. He then anchored his ships off Dungeness Point. Lecky says, 'At this critical moment the English fleet, which was greatly superior in numbers, doubled the South Foreland. An action seemed imminent, but wind and tide were both unfavourable, and Sir John Norris, who commanded the English, resolved to postpone it till the morrow. That night a great tempest arose, before which the French fleet fled in safety, but which scattered far and wide the transports, and put an end for the present to all projects of invasion.'[1]

The excitement in England caused by this attempted invasion was great. Fear in many places rose to panic, and the disturbance of the public mind continued for a long time. There was an impression that the danger which had been avoided would soon recur. When France declared war against England the country quivered with excitement. The strain of those anxious times lasted for months. It reached its point of highest intensity in 1745, when the 'Young Pretender' succeeded in landing in Scotland.

In these months of national agitation John and Charles Wesley pursued their work. Each of them possessed, in a pre-eminent degree, the patriotic spirit; their loyalty to the King and the British Government was absolute. But the country was ignorant of their political convictions, and they soon found themselves in perilous circumstances. Suspicion was in the air; it fell on them wherever they wandered. It was excited by absurd reports and statements about them which were the offspring of fiercely heated imagination. One *canard* was especially strong on the wing. It flew from Cornwall to the far north. It was alleged that, in 1743, John Wesley, who was a Jesuit, had been seen in the company of the 'Young Pretender,' who was disguised under the name of John Downes. A little inquiry showed that the time of the event was during Wesley's first visit to St. Ives, when he certainly was with John Downes, one of his lay preachers. For a time Downes suffered from an

[1] *History*, ii., 18.

attack of fever and was confined to his lodgings. His seclusion probably gave rise to the suspicion that he was 'a man in hiding.' Whatever may have been the provoking cause of the report, it is certain that it had a wide circulation. In not a few places it was steadfastly believed that John Wesley was a secret agent of the 'Pretender.'

We may dismiss this *canard* with a gesture of contempt, but it is necessary that we should seriously consider other facts concerning the Wesleys which belong to this distracted time. On February 25 the Government issued an order 'commanding all Papists and reputed Papists to depart from the cities of London and Westminster, and from within ten miles of the same, by March 2; and for confining Papists and reputed Papists to their habitations, and for seizing the arms and horses of such as refuse to take the oath.' John Wesley had intended to leave London on the Monday following the issuing of this 'order,' but he could not ignore the fact that he was 'reputed' to be a Papist. To cut off all occasion of reproach he determined to postpone his journey for a week. He made good use of his time. He was intent on relieving the necessities of the poor, who were suffering keenly, so he made a special collection for them. Finding that the amount was not sufficient, on March 2 he began a pilgrimage of the classes, begging the members to help. While he was at a house in Spitalfields, a neighbourhood in which there was a considerable settlement of French weavers, a Justice of the Peace came, with the parish officers, being on a search for Papists. Wesley took the opportunity to talk with them at large on the principles and practice of the Methodists. Leaving the house he found that a pretty large mob had assembled, and he was accompanied by a gaping, staring, and shouting crowd to the next place he visited. The following Monday he yielded to pressure and wrote an 'Address to the King.' He styled it 'The humble Address of the Societies in England and Wales, in derision called Methodists.' A few sentences from this 'Address' throw light on the position of the Methodist Societies at this period. He mentions the two considerations that had induced the Methodists 'to open their lips to His Majesty.' The first was that in spite of all their remonstrances on that head, the Methodists were continually represented as a peculiar sect of men, separating themselves from the

Established Church; the second was that they were still traduced as inclined to Popery and consequently disaffected to the King. The 'Address' then continues:

> Upon these considerations we think it incumbent upon us, if we must stand as a distinct body from our brethren, to tender for ourselves our most dutiful regards to your sacred Majesty; and to declare, in the presence of Him we serve, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, that we are a part (however mean) of that Protestant Church established in these kingdoms; that we unite together for this, and no other end—to promote, so far as we may be capable, justice, mercy, and truth, the glory of God, and peace and goodwill among men; that we detest and abhor the fundamental doctrines of the Church of Rome, and are steadily attached to your Majesty's royal person and illustrious house. We cannot, indeed, say or do either more or less than we apprehend consistent with the written Word of God; but we are ready to obey your Majesty to the uttermost, in all things which we conceive to be agreeable thereto. And we earnestly exhort all with whom we converse, as they fear God, to honour the King. We of the clergy in particular put all men in mind to revere the higher powers as of God, and continually declare, 'Ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.'[1]

John Wesley had informed his brother of his intention to prepare the 'Address to the King.' Charles Wesley, writing from Newcastle on March 6, said, 'My objection to your Address in the name of the Methodists is that it would constitute us a sect; at least it would *seem to allow* that we are a body distinct from the national Church, whereas we are only a sound part of that Church. Guard against this; and in the name of the Lord address to-morrow.'[2] The verbal criticism had some strength in it in the circumstances of that far-off time. On further consideration John Wesley decided not to present the 'Address.'

Finding it absolutely necessary to visit Bristol, John Wesley set out for that city on March 11. When he returned to London he found a summons from the justices of Surrey demanding his attendance at their court at St. Margaret's Hill. On March 20 he appeared there. He asked, 'Has any one anything to lay to my charge?' None made any reply. At length one of the justices said, 'Sir, are you willing to take the oaths to His Majesty, and to sign the declaration against Popery?' 'I am,' he said. He did so and returned home. Tyerman

[1] John Wesley's *Journal*, iii., 123. [2] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, i., 354.

suggests that a report had recently reached London that Wesley had been seen with the 'Pretender' in France, and that the summons was a consequence of gossip. The incident emphasizes the fact that at this time Wesley was suspected of Jacobite sympathies.

While John Wesley was feeling the stress of the political situation in London some of the lay preachers were passing through similar experiences in the country. When Charles Wesley and John Downes were nearing Epworth on March 10 they were overtaken on the common by Thomas Westell, who had been driven out of Nottingham by the mob and the Mayor. John Healey, who had been with him in Nottingham, gave Charles Wesley an account of their treatment. The Mayor sent for Westell, and Healey accompanied him. A copy of the oath which was then demanded of suspected persons was handed to Westell, who asked for a little time to read it. This was refused, the Mayor threatening to send him at once to prison. While the Mittimus was being made out Healey asked if the law did not allow a man three hours to consider the oath. This unexpected question slightly checked the haste of the Mayor and justices, and the form of oath was read. Westell said it was all very good, and that he had often heard John and Charles Wesley declare that 'King George was our rightful King, and no other.' He took the oath 'with all his heart.' Healey, being asked if he would take the oaths, answered, 'I will take them now; but I would not before I heard Mr. Wesleys; for I was a Jacobite till they convinced me of the truth, and of His Majesty's right.' This answer stirred up the wrath of a venerable alderman, who cried, 'See the old Jesuit! He has all his paces, I warrant you!' The magistrates, finding no just cause to commit them to prison, demanded their horses in the King's name, and would not believe they had none until they sent and searched. They were dismissed; but soon after the Mayor sent for Westell and commanded him to depart from the town. He obeyed the order, and made his way to Epworth.

The experiences of Thomas Westell throw light on the administration of justice in that critical time; but we gain still greater illumination from incidents in which Charles Wesley was the principal figure. On March 14 he was in Birstall. He was intending to set out to visit the Societies

formed by John Bennet in Derbyshire, but some one told him there was a constable in the town who had a warrant in which his name was mentioned. He sent for the constable, who showed him the warrant. It was 'to summon witnesses to some treasonable words said to have been spoken by one Westley.' He was in a difficulty as to the course to be pursued. Some of the Birstall people besought him to stay lest the enemies should say that he durst not stand his trial. In accordance with a common practice in those days, he determined to submit the question of leaving or staying to 'the lot.' After prayer the lot was drawn, and it was for staying. As it happened, several justices had assembled at Wakefield at this time, and the trial soon took place.

On March 15 Charles Wesley rode to Wakefield, and at eleven o'clock waited on Justice Burton at his inn. Two other justices, Sir Rowland Wynn and the Rev. Mr. Zouch, were present. Wesley, addressing Justice Burton, told him that he had seen his warrant summoning witnesses to some treasonable words 'said to be spoken by one Westley,' and that he had put off his journey to London to wait on him and answer whatever should be laid to his charge. Charles Wesley's description of the subsequent proceedings is so graphic and important that it must be quoted. After stating that Justice Burton declared he had nothing to say against him, and that he might depart, Charles Wesley continues :

> I replied that was not sufficient without clearing my character and that of many innocent people whom their enemies were pleased to call Methodists. 'Vindicate them!' said my brother clergyman. 'That you will find a very hard task.' I answered, 'As hard as you may think it, I will engage to prove that they all, to a man, are true members of the Church of England, and loyal subjects of His Majesty King George.' I then desired they would administer to me the oaths, and added, 'If it was not too much trouble, I could wish, gentlemen, you would send for every Methodist in England and give them the same opportunity you do me of declaring their loyalty upon oath.'
>
> Justice Burton said he was informed that we constantly prayed for the Pretender in all our Societies, or *nocturnal meetings*, as Mr. Zouch called them. I answered, 'The very reverse is true. We constantly pray for His Majesty King George by name. These are such hymns as we sing in our Societies ; a sermon I preached before the University ; another my brother preached there ; his *Appeals* ; and a few more treatises, containing our principles and practice.' Here I gave them our books, and was bold to say, 'I am as true a Church of England man,

and as loyal a subject, as any man in the kingdom.' 'That is impossible,' they cried all; but as it was not my business to dispute, and as I could not answer till the witnesses appeared, I withdrew without further reply.

While I waited at a neighbouring house one of the brethren brought me the constable of Birstall, whose heart God hath touched. He told me he had summoned the principal witness, Mary Castle, on whose information the warrant was granted, and who was setting out on horseback when the news came to Birstall that I was not gone forward to London, as they expected, but round to Wakefield. Hearing this, she turned back, and declared to him that she did not hear the treasonable words herself, but another woman told her so. Three more witnesses, who were to swear to my words, retracted likewise, and knew nothing of the matter. The fifth, good Mr. Woods, the ale-house keeper, is forthcoming, it seems, in the afternoon. . . .

Between two and three honest Mr. Woods came, and started back at sight of me as if he had trod upon a serpent. One of our brothers took hold on him, and told me he trembled every joint of him. The justice's clerk had bid the constable bring him to him as soon as ever he came, but, notwithstanding all the clerk's instructions, Woods frankly confessed, now he was come, he had nothing to say, and would not have come at all had they not forced him.

I waited at the door, where the justices were examining the disaffected till seven. I took public notice of Mr. Oherhausen, the Moravian teacher, but not of Mr. Kendrick. When all their business was over, and I had been insulted at their door from eleven in the morning till seven at night, I was sent for, and asked, 'What would Mr. Wesley desire?' Wesley: 'I desire nothing but to know what is alleged against me.' Justice Burton said, 'What hope of truth from him? He is another of them.' Then, addressing to me, 'Here are two of your brethren, one so silly it is a shame he should ever set up for a teacher; and the other has told us a thousand lies and equivocations upon oath. He has not wit enough, or he would make a complete Jesuit.' I looked round, and said, 'I see none of my brethren here but this gentleman,' pointing to the reverend justice, who looked as if he did not thank me for claiming him. Burton: 'Why, do you not know this man?' (showing me Kendrick). Wesley: 'Yes, sir, very well, for two years ago I expelled him our Society in London for setting up for a preacher.' To this poor Kendrick assented; which put a stop to further reflections on the Methodists.

Justice Burton then said I might depart, for they had nothing against me. Wesley: 'Sir, that is not sufficient; I cannot depart till my character is fully cleared. It is no trifling matter. Even my life is concerned in the charge.' Burton: 'I did not summon you to appear.' Wesley: 'I was the person meant by "one Westley," and my supposed words were the occasion of your order, which I read, signed with your name.' Burton: 'I will not deny my order. I did send to summon the witnesses.' Wesley: 'Yes; and I took down their names from the constable's paper. The principal witness, Mary Castle,

was setting out, but, hearing I was here, she turned back and declared to the constable she only heard another say that I spoke treason. Three more of the witnesses recanted for the same reason; and Mr. Woods, who is here, says he has nothing to say, and should not have come neither had he not been forced by the minister. Had I not been here he would have had enough to say; and ye would have had witnesses and oaths enough; but I suppose my coming has prevented theirs.' One of the justices added, 'I suppose so too.'

They all seemed fully satisfied, and would have had me so too; but I insisted on their hearing Mr. Woods. Burton: 'Do you desire he may be called as an evidence for you?' Wesley: 'I desire he may be heard as an evidence against me if he has aught to lay to my charge.' Then Mr. Zouch asked Woods what he had to say, what were the words I spoke. Woods was as backward to speak as they to hear him, but was at last compelled to say, 'I have nothing to say against the gentleman; I only heard him pray that the Lord would call home His banished.' Zouch: 'But were there no words before or after which pointed to these troublesome times?' Woods: 'No, none at all.' Wesley: 'It was on February 12, before the earliest news of the invasion. But if folly and malice may be interpreters, any words which any of you gentlemen speak may be construed into treason.' Zouch: 'It is very true.' Wesley: 'Now, gentlemen, give me leave to explain my own words. I had no thoughts of praying for the Pretender, but for those that confess themselves strangers and pilgrims upon earth, who seek a country, knowing this is not their place. The Scriptures you, sir, know' (to the clergyman), 'speak of us as captive exiles, who are absent from the Lord while in the body. We are not at home till we are in heaven.' Zouch: 'I thought you would so explain the words; and it is a fair interpretation.' I asked if they were all satisfied. They said they were, and cleared me as fully as I desired.

I then asked them again to administer to me the oaths. Mr. Zouch looked on my sermon, asked who ordained me (the Archbishop and Bishop of London the same week), and said, with the rest, it was quite unnecessary since I was a clergyman and student of Christ Church, and had preached before the University and taken the oaths before. Yet I motioned it again, till they acknowledged in explicit terms 'my loyalty unquestionable.' I then presented Sir Rowland and Mr. Zouch with the *Appeal*, and took my leave.[1]

Charles Wesley, after his interviews with the magistrates at Wakefield, returned to Birstall. He was met on the road by many of the Society, who received his news with rejoicing. They gathered together on the hill 'and sang praises lustily, with a good courage.' Their enemies, who were expecting a different result, were rising 'full of the Wednesbury devil'

[1] C. Wesley's *Journal*, i., 358–362. The *Appeal* was John Wesley's *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*.

and had commenced to pull down John Nelson's house ; but when the triumphant songs of the Methodists were heard the mob dispersed and did no more mischief.

Journeying towards London, Charles Wesley preached, among other places, in the house of John Bennet's father, and also 'in the heart of the Peak.' On March 19 he came to Nottingham. It was night, but the news of his arrival was soon known. Daniel Sant's house, where he was staying, was beset by the mob. Through the encouragement of the Mayor the rioting in the town had come to a great height, and determined efforts were being made to crush and scatter the Methodists. The magistrates were in sympathy with the mob. They not only refused justice, but they abused the Methodists as rioters. Charles Wesley learned that some of the members, knowing that Judge Abdy was to pass through the town, had presented him with a petition stating their case. The judge spoke kindly to them, and bade them 'present the Corporation' if they were further molested. He did more. He saw the Mayor, chided him for his conduct, and made him send his officers through the town to forbid any one to injure the Methodists. He said to the Mayor, 'If you will begin, why don't you put down the assemblies contrary to law? Instead of that, if there be one religious Society you must set upon that to destroy it!' But the Mayor would not interfere with the assembling of the mob ; and as soon as the Judge was out of the town the Methodists were more persecuted than ever. They complained, but the Mayor insulted them, and, in derision, said, 'Why don't you go to my Lord Judge?' He also threatened that when the press warrants came out Daniel Sant should be seized, his only crime being that he allowed people to pray in his house. Spending a day in Nottingham, Charles Wesley exhorted 'the few remaining sheep to keep together,' and then rode to Northampton. On March 22 he reached the Foundery.

When Charles Wesley returned to London he had a consultation with his brother, and it was agreed that it was enough for one of them to stay in town while the other left to strengthen the Societies in the country. Acting on this arrangement, John Wesley on March 26 set out for Cornwall in company with James Wheatley, one of the lay preachers. On his way he preached at Bristol, Axminster, and Sticklepath. When

he reached Launceston he found the hills covered with snow as in the depth of winter. After a rough journey the travellers, on April 4, came to St. Ives. Persecution still raged in the town. Wesley says that it was owing in great measure to the indefatigable labours of the two clergymen, Mr. Hoblyn and Mr. Symonds. He was surprised to find that Dr. William Borlase, 'a person of unquestioned sense and learning, could speak evil of this way after he had seen such a change in the most abandoned of his parishioners.' His surprise will be shared by students of Cornish Antiquities, but they must remember that it is possible for a man to know much about the monuments of the pre-historic age and yet to be blind to the signs of his own times. Wesley's surprise was modified when he heard that Jonathan Reeves, one of his lay preachers, had waited on Dr. Borlase, who asked him, 'Who has been the better for this preaching?' John Daniel was standing near, and Reeves replied, 'The man before you for one, who never before knew any work of God upon his soul.' Dr. Borlase cried out, 'Get along! You are a parcel of mad, crazy-headed fellows.' Taking Reeves by the shoulder, he thrust him to the door. Dr. Borlase had several livings, and may not have had time to consider the reformation wrought at St. Just. The men of St. Just were considered the chief of the whole country for hurling, fighting, drinking, and all manner of wickedness, but many of them had been changed under the influence of Methodist preaching. Their vicar, unlike the curate-in-charge, did not perceive their altered character and conduct. He went on his way; and, we say with regret, that, as a magistrate, he became one of the fiercest persecutors of the Methodists.[1]

Wednesday, April 11, had been proclaimed as a National fast-day on the occasion of the threatened invasion of the 'Young Pretender.' The church at St. Ives was well filled, Wesley and other Methodists being present. Mr. Hoblyn preached. He selected for his text, 'If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household.' It is not easy to see the suitability of this text to a public fast-day, but Mr. Hoblyn surmounted all expository difficulties and made a weapon for an attack on the people he hated. He vehemently declaimed against

[1] *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iv., 187.

'the new sect,' called the Methodists the enemies of the Church, Jacobites and Papists, and furiously fulminated against them. After the service Wesley gathered his people together, spent an hour with them in prayer, and did not forget 'the poor sinner against his own soul.' The next day the effect of Mr. Hoblyn's harangue was seen in St. Ives. James Wheatley was assaulted in the street, and John Nance's house was beset by a mob, shouting, 'Bring out the preacher! Pull down the house!' The rioters set to work to wrench away the boards that had been nailed against the windows. They then had to stop, for the Mayor came and read the proclamation against riots. Hearing it, the mob broke out into oaths and imprecations, but thought it safer to disperse.

On his return journey to Bristol Wesley had a pleasant experience. Reaching Trewint on Monday, April 16, he was informed that notice had been given that he would preach in Laneast church that evening. He went there, and found the church crowded. When we remember that the venerable John Bennett was the minister of Laneast we can understand Wesley's joy in this service. In his parishes Mr. Bennett, as we have seen, had done effectively the work of an evangelist. It was a memorable meeting between two remarkable men. Wesley spent the night at the parsonage. We can imagine his gladness as he conversed with a man of a kindred spirit. The next morning the two clergymen went to the five-o'clock service at Trewint, when Wesley preached. Then they parted for a time, to meet again and to confirm a friendship which was fruitful in its effects on the spiritual condition of Cornwall. After a preaching tour in Wales Wesley arrived in Bristol on April 28, resting there, 'though not unemployed,' for eight days.

XIII

A DISTRACTED COUNTRY

On May 7 John Wesley left Bristol and travelled towards the north. Arriving in Lincolnshire, he had abundant evidence of 'the inexpressible panic' which had spread in all places. The threat of invasion had demoralized the people, and had hurried some of the magistrates into wild proceedings against the Methodists. Among the justices there were men who possessed a judicial spirit and sought to restrain the impetuous actions of their colleagues. We must give a place of honour to Mr. Maw, of Epworth. When Wesley arrived in that town he immediately waited on him and thanked him for his fearless conduct. Some days before John Downes had been taken into custody by a constable at Ferry, and brought before the Bench at Kirton. He had been 'pressed' as a soldier. The magistrates resolved that he should be sent into the army, their acknowledged reason being that he was 'a preacher.' In order to secure him they committed him as a prisoner to Lincoln jail. Mr. Maw, who was a magistrate, protested against these proceedings, and, in court, bore 'an honest and open testimony for the truth.' He spoke in vain; John Downes was sent to prison.

The 'pressing' of Methodist preachers, and other members of the Society, was rapidly becoming the settled policy, and Wesley soon found that it had been adopted in Yorkshire. Leaving Epworth, he rode to Sykehouse. When he was about to preach there people came to him in all haste and told him that all the men in the congregation would be 'pressed' for the army. Others said that the mob was coming to set the house on fire, or to pull it to the ground. Wesley quietly replied, 'Then our only way is to make the best use of it while it is standing.' So he began to expound the tenth chapter of St. Matthew. No more appropriate chapter could have been chosen for the instruction and encouragement of his persecuted

flock. The service proceeded, and ended without hostile interruption.

When Wesley arrived at Birstall on May 15 he heard news that tested his remarkable self-control. He found that, on May 4, John Nelson had been seized by constables when preaching at Adwalton. Their warrant empowered them to take him into custody 'as a vagrant or bad character.' It was issued under the influence of Mr. Coleby, the vicar of Birstall, in consort with the ale-house keepers of that town. Nelson was taken before the commissioners at Halifax. Among them was Mr. Coleby. Full particulars of the proceedings of the commissioners are given in a pamphlet entitled *The Case of John Nelson, written by Himself.* Its perusal stirs the wonder and indignation of all who prize the liberty of the subject, and the impartial administration of English law. The commissioners on the Bench laughed and swore and drank. When Nelson asked that the witnesses to his respectability might be heard they answered, 'Surely your minister must be a better judge of you than any other man; and he has told us enough of you and your preaching.' Turning to his vicar, Nelson asked, 'What do you know of me that is evil? Whom have I defrauded? Or where have I contracted a debt that I cannot pay?' Mr. Coleby replied, 'You have no visible way of getting your living.' This was a ridiculous accusation. Nelson answered, 'I am as able to get my living with my hands as any man of my trade in England is, and you know it; and have I not been at work yesterday, and all the week before?' But on the vicar's mendacious testimony he was condemned and handed over to the captain, who marched him and others to Halifax jail. The keeper refused to admit the squad of 'recruits,' and they were billeted in the officers' quarters. The next day Nelson and his companions were marched to Bradford, where, according to the orders of the commissioners, John Nelson was put into a loathsome dungeon. He tells us that about ten o'clock at night several of the people brought him some candles, and put him some meat and water through the hole of the door. Then, when he had eaten and drunk, he gave God thanks; and he within and the people outside the dungeon sang hymns almost all night.[1]

[1] See Dr. Stamp's *Wesleyan Methodism in Bradford*, 10. The frontispiece shows the entrance to the dungeon where Nelson was imprisoned.

John Nelson's adventures as a soldier are graphically described in his *Journal*, contained in the *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*. The account abounds in interest. It proves, among other things, that the policy of magistrates and commissioners in 'pressing' the Methodist preachers was short-sighted. By sending them into the army they opened to them a new sphere of usefulness, and gave them an opportunity of doing work which subsequently increased the success of the Methodist Reformation. No one who is acquainted with the by-ways of Methodist history is ignorant of the fact that, during the eighteenth century, many Methodist Societies were formed in England and elsewhere by soldiers who had been influenced by the preaching to which they had listened when in the army.[1]

Leaving Birstall, Wesley went to Leeds. He preached there on May 18, and on the next day set out on a journey that led him away from the noise of life into a quiet country. As we follow him 'the light of other days' shines around us; the memories of wanderings over the hills, through the woods and by the rivers of Yorkshire awake from their slumber. It is a relief to get away from the turmoil of Wesley's rough experiences and to join him as he travels towards 'lovely Wensleydale.' We are now able to see him on this journey more clearly than ever. Mr. Marmaduke Riggall, when searching for documents contained in the library of the Fetter Lane Moravian Chapel, discovered a *Diary* kept by Richard Viney in the year 1744. Amongst its varied contents is an interesting description of Wesley's journey from Leeds to Wensley. Viney was his companion, and he gives us many particulars of the excursion.

It is important to state that Wesley, in the previous autumn, had visited the dale, and had stayed with Mr. Clayton, the rector of Wensley.[2] On this first visit he had preached in Wensley church. His text was, 'What must I do to be saved?' In the plainest words he could devise he had shown 'that mere

[1] For John Nelson's treatment by the commissioners see Wesley's *Journal*, iii., 138–139. In a *note* the editor of the *Journal* gives an illustration of 'the sweet revenges of time.' On July 16, 1910, the vicar of Birstall, with an ex-President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, a Cabinet Minister, Mr. Walter Runciman, and a great company of Yorkshire neighbours and Conference delegates, united to honour the name of John Nelson. On that day Nelson's memorial was unveiled in the parish church. Sir William Middlebrook was present at this remarkable gathering.

[2] Care must be taken not to confound him with John Clayton, of Manchester, Wesley's old friend who had forsaken him.

outside religion would not bring us to heaven ; that none could go thither without inward holiness, which was only to be attained by faith.' At the end of the service, passing through the churchyard, he found many of the parishioners lingering there, who were engaged in high debate. They were attempting to decide the question, ' Of what religion is this preacher ? ' Some said, ' He is a Quaker ' ; others, ' He is an Anabaptist.' ' But,' says Wesley, ' at length one deeper learned than the rest brought them all clearly over to his opinion that he was a Presbyterian Papist.' The discussion of these rural theologians produced an effect which was apparent on Wesley's second visit.

Wesley and Richard Viney had only one horse on this journey. They ' rode and tied,' and so spent little time together on the road. Arriving at Wensley, they went to the rectory, and were received kindly by Mr. Clayton and his curate, Mr. Young. Viney, with a few strokes of his pen, sets the rector before us. He was seventy years of age ; he had studied medicine, and had practised as a doctor until he was fifty, when he became a clergyman. After being connected with the Waterford Cathedral, in Ireland, he removed to England and settled in Wensleydale. He had private means, and his ' livings ' brought him in nearly £300 a year—a considerable sum at that time. He had five churches to serve, with the aid of two curates. Like Wesley, he was very generous to the poor, and much of his income was spent in relieving their distresses.

On Sunday, May 20, in the early morning, Mr. Thornton, the brother of a lawyer who was a member of the Methodist Society in London, called at the rectory and invited Wesley to breakfast at his house. He lived at Redmire, a village about two miles from Wensley. Mr. Young was the curate of that place, having charge of the old church, the Norman doorway of which still cries ' halt ' to the passing antiquary. He had asked Wesley to preach there, and so he and Viney left the rectory and went to Redmire. Mr. Young had been busy in the village inviting the parishioners to come to the service ; he had also sent messages to the neighbouring parishes. There was a large congregation. Wesley preached and assisted in the administration of the Lord's Supper. It was one of his halcyon days. He says that from a village of about thirty houses they

had more than fifty communicants. He and Mr. Young were evidently of one mind. The curate of Redmire stands out from the mass of the country clergy of his day. Viney tells us that he had done much good in his parishes ' in reforming the people from outward sins.' He had taken pains to instruct them in the duties of religion and had visited from house to house. As a result the villagers in Redmire, in Viney's estimation, were the most orderly and the soberest people he had seen in a country place. As to the attendance at the sacrament, he declares that it was to him an uncommon sight. When we are inclined to denounce the clergy of the eighteenth century it is well to remember that hidden away in obscure parishes there were men, like Mr. Young, who to the utmost of their strength and knowledge were doing their duty.

In the afternoon Wesley preached at Castle Bolton in another chapel of which Mr. Young had charge. Once more there was a large audience, and Wesley was impressed by the serious behaviour of the congregation. After the service he was asked to visit the old castle in which Mary Queen of Scots was for some time interned. His admiration of Queen Mary is well known, and it must have been with some emotion that he gazed on the place of her imprisonment. After tea with another brother of Mr. Thornton's they set out on their return to Wensley. Mr. Young accompanied them, and on the way showed them the Bolton Hall gardens, having discovered, we suspect, Wesley's love of flowers. During this May visit to Wensleydale the weather was very fine and very warm. It is easy to realize the beauty and restfulness of that evening. We picture the three men as they move towards the rectory. We wonder if they talked of Miles Coverdale, that great religious reformer whose standard of appeal was ' the written word of God.' Let us not forget him. He has laid all succeeding generations of Englishmen under obligation by his translation of the Bible into the common tongue of the people. He was a Yorkshire dalesman. It is generally supposed that he was born in Coverdale, not far from Wensley. Through it a road leads, by a valley that winds under the shadow of Great Whernside, to Wharfedale. His voice had been heard in the churches of England that day, and it is still heard. The Prayer Book Psalter, in essence, is the Psalter of his Bible. Dr. Moulton, in his *History of the English Bible*, says that ' a

multitude of passages, remarkable for beauty and tenderness, and often for strength and vigour, are common to both our versions of the Psalms, and are due to Coverdale.' After specifying some of them, he continues, 'It would be easy to multiply quotations, some identical in their language with the Authorized Version, some agreeing with it in almost every point of importance; but enough has been given to show to how great an extent the noble language of our Psalter is derived from the Bible of 1535.' [1] As a religious reformer Wesley stood in direct descent from Miles Coverdale. It is not improbable that his name was mentioned in the wayside talk of that evening.

There seems to have been only one cloud in the sky on that beautiful day. Glancing over Wesley's record, we wonder why he did not preach once more in Wensley church. The *Diary* of Viney suggests the explanation. We judge that the village criticism of the sermon Wesley preached on the occasion of his first visit had impressed Mr. Clayton. It would seem that he came to the conclusion that Wesley was wrong in his teaching, and that he determined 'he would by no means suffer him to preach in his church again.' So far as we know, he did not broach the subject when his visitors returned to his house. There is something significant in Viney's laconic entry in his *Diary*: 'We got to Mr. Clayton's about eight, and after sitting a while went to bed.' Mr. Clayton died on July 21, 1746. It is a relief to record that on his dying day he sent a message to Wesley 'wishing him prosperity in his pious undertakings.' As the light of eternity shone upon him the cloud between the old friends passed away.

Wesley and his companion left the dale on Monday, May 21, and rode towards Newcastle, where a quiet week was spent. The Orphan House was becoming a place of refuge from the storms of life. In his little study Wesley secluded himself, and read, wrote, meditated, and prayed. Dr. Stamp, in his description of the Orphan House, gives us a glimpse of this study. He says:

> On the highest story—a kind of Scotch 'flat'—were suites of apartments, subsequently appropriated for the residence of the preachers and their families; while on the roof was a wooden erection, about

[1] *The History of the English Bible*, pp. 116–117.

eleven feet square, with tiled covering, generally known as ' Mr. Wesley's study.' A narrow staircase, little more than two feet wide, led from the preachers' dwelling below to a small floor in the actual roof of the building, opening from which was the doorway to the study. This apartment, even in the tidiest days of the Orphan House, must have been of the most homely description. The fireplace (the grate of which is still preserved) would, in this day, be repudiated by the most humble cottager. In strict keeping with it were the door and furniture of the room. Its exposure to the wintry blasts of the north would also render it an undesirable retreat for any to whom warmth and comfort were matters of moment. Such, however, was the apartment designed and appropriated by the self-denying Wesley for his special residence when sojourning in Newcastle.[1]

During Wesley's visit to Newcastle the town was seething with excitement caused by the fear of invasion, but he makes no mention of the political turmoil in this part of his *Journal*. After a week of quietness he began visiting the classes in the town, and then visited those in the country. He was delighted with the condition of the Societies ; in his opinion there was not a disorderly walker, and scarcely one trifler left among them. Previous discipline, and the constant care exercised by lay preachers and class-leaders, had produced most satisfactory effects, and the desire of his heart for the Christian consistency of his people was gratified.

Wesley in his *Journal* speaks of ' the quiet week ' he spent at the Orphan House. But Viney's records show that he was very busy in his study throughout this ' retreat.' Let us dip into the *Diary* and endeavour to recall the vanished past. Wesley and Viney were not the only occupants of the Orphan House. In addition, when ' the family ' gathered for meals or worship we see Thomas Westell and Thomas Meyrick, two lay preachers, and Matthew Errington. Mrs. Grace Murray, who attracts our particular attention, is also there ; so is Mrs. Jackson, who occupies her own place as housekeeper. These names are suggestive, but we must not now dwell on them. We will leave the table, climb the stairs, and find our way into ' the library.'

Wesley was a passionate lover of books. A library in each of his preaching-houses was his *beau-idéal*. He was realizing it at the Orphan House, and had begun to form a nucleus of books. With the help of Viney, who was a tailor, he was

[1] Stamp's *Orphan House of Wesley*, 16.

getting his treasures into order. Day by day Viney devoted himself to sorting and placing the books on the shelves and stitching pamphlets newly issued from the press. One pamphlet arrested his special attention. It was entitled *Remarks on Mr. Whitefield's Letter to Mr. Wesley, on his Sermon on Free Grace, in a Letter from a Gentlewoman to her Friend.* He stinted his labours and read it. He mentioned it to Wesley, who informed him that it was written by his mother. Mr. Riggall is of opinion that the pamphlet owes little, if anything, to Wesley's editorial pen; and it is clear that Mrs. Susanna Wesley, during the bitter conflict that arose in consequence of the publication of the sermon on 'Free Grace,' did not leave her son to fight the battle alone. In addition to stitching and sorting, we note that Viney employed some of his time in preparing tickets for the classes.

While Viney was busy in the library, John Wesley was hard at work in the study. A project he had cherished for several years was about to be realized—a Conference was to be held in London. We shall deal with the transactions of that Conference in our next chapter, but it is necessary to say that, before it was held, Wesley made very careful preparation for it. On June 1 he brought into the library a four-paged manuscript which contained what may be called a Conference 'Agenda.' He left it for Viney to 'look over,' and asked him 'to set down all the objections he had against anything in it.' Wesley's confidence in Viney's judgement excites our surprise. The 'Agenda' has escaped 'the jaws of time.' Viney read it, carefully copied it, and pasted the copy in his *Diary*. Mr. Riggall, in his turn, has copied it, and has laid us under great obligation by sending us his transcript. Comparing the 'Agenda' with the subsequent decisions of the Conference, it is clear that it determined the course of the 'conversations' that took place in London.

Leaving Newcastle on June 11, Wesley rode towards Durham. His travelling companion was Thomas Westell, who rode ahead and was the first to arrive in the city. When he got there he found the market-place full of soldiers. He was making inquiries for Nelson when he suddenly met him. The two lay preachers greeted each other warmly, Nelson's joy being greatly increased when he was told that Mr. Wesley would be in the city soon after four o'clock. Eager to meet

him, the two preachers walked to a common which was about a mile from the town, and there the meeting took place. Speaking of Wesley, Nelson says in his *Journal*, 'My heart rejoiced to see him, and great reason have I to give God thanks that I ever saw him, who was an instrument in God's hand of plucking me as a brand out of the fire. And I have found him God's messenger for my good ever since.' Returning to Durham, they had much conversation. At six o'clock Nelson left the 'Angel' to answer the roll-call, and Wesley went to the cathedral.

Later in the evening Nelson, with two others, waited on Wesley at his inn. One of his companions, Thomas Beard, arrests our special attention. Wesley's description of him lingers in the memory. He was among the first of his lay preachers, a quiet and peaceable man, 'who had lately been torn from his trade, and wife, and children, and sent away as a soldier; that is, banished from all that was near and dear to him, and constrained to dwell among lions, for no other crime, either committed or pretended, than that of calling sinners to repentance. But his soul was in nothing terrified by his adversaries. Yet the body, after a while, sank under its burden. He was then lodged in the hospital at Newcastle, where he still praised God continually. His fever increasing, he was let blood. His arm festered, mortified, and was cut off, two or three days after which God signed his discharge, and called him up to his eternal home.

> Servant of God, well done! Well hast thou fought
> The better fight; who single hast maintained,
> Against revolted multitudes, the cause
> Of God; in word mightier than they in arms.'[1]

We look with respect on the little group of men in the 'Angel.' We hear the voice of Wesley saying, 'Brother Nelson, lose no time; speak and spare not; for God hath work for you to do in every place where your lot is cast, and when you have fulfilled His good pleasure He will break your bonds in sunder, and we shall rejoice together.' After prayer these 'good soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ' said farewell.

[1] *Journal*, iii., 141. When Charles Wesley heard of Thomas Beard's death he wrote two triumphant hymns of Christian joy which appear in *The Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, v., 219, 221.

Thomas Beard went to his death, Nelson to sharp persecution, and John Wesley to his great world-parish, where continuous opposition and affliction awaited him.

Leaving Durham, John Wesley visited Knaresborough, Leeds, and Birstall. On June 14, accompanied by John Bennet, he set out on an interesting journey into Lancashire and Cheshire, and became acquainted with several Societies formed by Bennet in these counties. He reached Epworth on Sunday, June 17, preached there morning and evening, and attended the parish church twice. Mr. Romley, as was his wont, attacked the Methodists, and the character of his discourses may be judged from Wesley's comment, 'Two such sermons as Mr. Romley preached on this day, so exquisitely bitter and totally false, I cannot say I ever heard before.'

On Wednesday, June 20, John Wesley met his brother in London and received an account of events which had seriously disturbed the Society at the Foundery. They are of special importance as they cast light on the cause and course of the earlier Methodist 'agitations,' and for that reason we mention them. We are familiar with the name of Thomas Williams. He was the lay preacher who had created great trouble in Wednesbury by his imprudent attacks on the clergy. We have seen that the Wesleys deprecated these attacks. They were exceptionally well acquainted with the unsatisfactory character of the clergy throughout the country, but they were convinced it was unwise to make them the subjects of unsparing denunciation in their sermons. Their patience was sorely tried, but, up to the period we have reached, they had been faithful to the 'rule' which forbids 'speaking evil of ministers.' In their *Journals* they found some relief for their feelings; but in public they put a remarkable restraint on themselves.[1] They kept a steady eye on their chief work, the salvation of the people. Thomas Williams differed from them in his opinion. He considered that it was his duty to denounce inconsistent clergymen in public, and he discharged this part of his duty with trenchant fidelity. We have seen the result in Wednesbury and the neighbourhood.

On May 2, when Charles Wesley was in charge of the

[1] It must be remembered that Charles Wesley did not write his *Journal* with a view to its publication, and that the 'parts' of John Wesley's *Journal* were published, in several cases, some years after the recorded events had occurred.

Foundery and other London Societies, he had an interview with Williams that surprised him. Williams told him that he had applied to the Archbishop for 'orders,' and he requested Charles Wesley to give him a recommendatory letter. This he declined to do. He considered that Williams was unfit for the position of a clergyman, and he blamed him for his hastiness. Williams was very angry, and 'flew out of the house.' According to one who knew him well, he was 'a haughty, revengeful, headlong, and unmanageable man,' and he soon showed that his friend's estimate of his character was correct. He commenced personal attacks on the Wesleys, railing on them as 'Papists, tyrants, and enemies of the Church.' He declared he had found them out, and went to and fro in the Societies 'scattering firebrands' and vowing vengeance. His proceedings produced a great disturbance in the Foundery Society. Some of the young women espoused his cause, and were ready to tear Charles Wesley to pieces for his cruelty in hindering him from getting 'orders.'

Charles Wesley made attempts to reason with the disappointed man, and tried to bring him to a better state of mind. He first of all spoke to him with all kindness, but could not in any measure humble him. At another interview he was more successful. He besought him to return and recover himself out of the snare of the devil. Williams, bursting into tears, 'confessed the devil's devices to separate him from his best and only friends, and promised obedience for the time to come.' His brief repentance was in vain. He renewed his agitation. It appears he had formed a design to 'set up for himself,' and was convinced that above five hundred members of the Society would follow him. Allured by this vision, he renewed his 'agitation.' Once more he urged his charges against the Wesleys, there being 'nothing so gross or improbable' that he did not say. Charles Wesley was well-nigh reduced to despair. Writing to a friend, he says, 'Pray for me, that I also may endure unto the end; for a thousand times I cry out, "The burden of this people is more than I am able to bear."' It was fortunate for him, and for the Society, that at this crisis John Wesley returned to London. His cool and steady mind and his strong hand were soon in evidence. The Society was visited, and was 'purged of all that did not walk according to the gospel.' By this process the numbers

were reduced to less than nineteen hundred members, John Wesley's comment being, 'Number is an inconsiderable circumstance.' But Williams continued his devisive 'agitation.' John Wesley bore with him for a fortnight, endeavouring to prevent him 'from destroying his own and many other souls'; but he laboured in vain. On August 2 he was constrained to declare in the Society that 'Thomas Williams is no longer in connexion with us.' For some time the exclusion of Williams was maintained, but on his repentance for his conduct Wesley relented, and received him once more as a lay preacher. He could never resist the signs of true repentance. Whether he read them correctly in this case will afterwards appear.[1]

[1] See Charles Wesley's *Journal*, i., 364–367; John Wesley's *Journal*, iii., 144 and *note*; Atmore's *Methodist Memorial*, 507.

XIV

THE FIRST CONFERENCE

On Sunday, June 24, 1744, West Street Chapel was crowded. At the sacramental service the Wesleys were assisted by three clergymen—John Hodges, the rector of Wenvoe, in Wales; John Meriton, from the Isle of Man; and Samuel Taylor, the vicar of Quinton, near Evesham, who was a descendant of Dr. Rowland Taylor, of Hadleigh, in Suffolk, who suffered martyrdom in 1555, during the reign of Queen Mary. In the evening the London Methodists held a love-feast, at which six ordained ministers were present. We presume that the sixth was Henry Piers, the vicar of Bexley. What was the occasion of the gathering of so many clergymen? It indicated that John Wesley's long-cherished design was on the eve of accomplishment. For years he had ardently desired that the clergymen who sympathized with him in his work should come together and confer with him on the best methods of conducting it. Here and there in the country were clergymen who longed for the revival of spiritual religion in England, and who saw that it was being promoted on a large scale by the courageous and self-sacrificing efforts of the Methodists. John Wesley highly valued the sympathy of these far-sighted men; he was convinced that their counsel would assist him in his work. After due deliberation he determined to act. Notwithstanding the disturbed condition of the country a Conference was convened, and on Monday, June 25, it began its 'conversations' in the Foundery.

If we had to rely solely on the *Journals* of John and Charles Wesley for information concerning the proceedings of the first Conference we should possess little knowledge of the work it accomplished. The Wesleys do not seem to have fully perceived the importance of the step they had taken, and their references to the Conference are brief. It is fortunate that we have sources of information from which we can derive

knowledge that lights us on our way. Many years ago a little manuscript book which John Wesley had given into the custody of his stepson-in-law, Mr. Smith, of Newcastle, came into the possession of Miss Tooth, a well-known member of the London Society. It was subsequently acquired by Mr. Morley, of Leeds, whose widow presented it to Headingley College. The Rev. G. Stringer Rowe describes it as a small book six inches by four inches, and adds: 'It is accompanied by a document which authenticates it satisfactorily as the copy used by Wesley and carried in his pocket until he began to publish the *Minutes*. Its appearance agrees herewith, the paper boards in which it is bound being much worn. The contents are in four handwritings, and here and there are corrections in Wesley's own hand. The record begins with the Wednesday of the Conference of 1744.'

The Headingley 'Minutes' do not stand alone. In 1896 the Wesley Historical Society published an invaluable document. Among a large number of interesting Methodist manuscripts which had been in the possession of the Bennet family for three generations there was a book, in the handwriting of John Bennet, which contained the 'Minutes' of several of the earlier Conferences. This book was presented to Mr. Thursfield Smith, of Whitchurch, who permitted the Society to publish its contents. The entries of the business transacted are more complete than in the Headingley copy, and that fact causes us to take the Bennet 'Minutes' as our guide in attempting to record the proceedings of the first Methodist Conference. If we add to these sources of information the 'Agenda' prepared by Wesley, which has been recently discovered in the *Diary* of Richard Viney, we shall have ample materials for a study of the deliberations of this Conference.[1]

On Monday morning, June 25, John and Charles Wesley, John Hodges, Henry Piers, Samuel Taylor, and John Meriton, six clergymen, met at the Foundery. They spent some time in prayer and then considered the question of the design of the Conference. It was agreed that the 'conversations' should be on the following subjects: First, 'What to teach'; secondly, 'How to Teach'; and thirdly, 'What to do,' i.e. 'How to regulate our Doctrine, Discipline, and Practice.' This was

[1] *W.H.S. Publications*, No. 1. See also *Minutes of Conference*, i., 708–720.

the line proposed by Wesley in his 'Agenda,' and we cannot doubt that the document was before the clergymen at their preliminary consultation. When this matter was settled a question was asked and immediately answered. It concerned the attendance of the lay preachers at the Conference, and it was decided 'to invite, from time to time, such of them as we should think proper.' In accordance with that decision, Thomas Richards, Thomas Maxfield, John Bennet, and John Downes were called into the room. The first Conference, therefore, was constituted of six clergymen and four lay preachers. The method of summoning future Conferences was arranged, and so two great principles which determined the constitution of the Conferences held during the life of Wesley were established.

We are so well acquainted with some of the men who composed the first Conference that we can discern the aspect of the little company that met in the Foundery on that June day. There is not a name that does not call up the recollection of service in the great work that had been commenced in England. But our eyes are fixed on John Wesley. Do we see him as he was in 1744? We may do so if we look at his portrait which is one of the precious possessions of Didsbury College, Manchester. It was painted by John Michael Williams, R.A., in 1743, the year before the first Conference was held. The Rev. Richard Green, the Governor of the College for many years, has exactly expressed the impression that the portrait makes on a man who studies it. He says:

> This portrait by Williams is of great interest as representing Wesley in the vigour of his days. The face is of the Miltonic type. The nose is prominent and well defined; from a little above the centre to the tip is almost a straight line, thus differentiating it from the distinctive Roman type. The eyes are large and reflective, and over them the lids fall sufficiently to indicate calmness and rest, without drooping to drowsiness. There is no appearance of hurry or flutter in them, but a hidden power of activity and sustained labour. They betoken a concentration of thought on the present moment; there is no distant and dreamy absence of mind. They are fixed on the beholder with that calm, penetrating gaze with which he arrested the leaders of riotous mobs, and put to silence disturbers and rude assailants in his meetings. The well-modelled mouth is firm, without sternness; it indicates calmness, placidity, and self-control; it shows no line of flippancy or anger, but an habitual seriousness that evidently could brighten into sweetness and joy, or could melt into tenderness rather than harden itself

into severity. Power of thought is shown in the widely spread eyebrows and the ample and slightly tapering forehead, partly hidden by the dark auburn hair, which, parted in the middle, falls in wavy ringlets upon the narrow, sloping shoulders. The square jaw and slightly projecting chin add strength and energy to the whole. The entire aspect is peaceful and at rest, grave without sadness, without agitation, or sign of fear or weakness ; calm and even majestic in its consciousness of strength, but free from foible and vanity ; it shows great reserve of power, and capability withal of quivering emotion. It is the face of one having large sympathies, busied with great thoughts, moved by great purposes.[1]

With a copy of Wesley's ' Agenda ' before us we will follow the business of the first Conference. When it had been constituted Wesley read a paper he had prepared in which he indicated the spirit in which the ' conversations ' should be conducted. His suggestions were approved. It is well to record them. ' It is desired, That all things may be considered as in the immediate presence of God ; That we may meet with a single eye, and as little children who have everything to learn ; That every point may be examined from the foundation ; That every person may speak freely whatever is in his heart ; and that every question proposed may be fully debated, and bolted to the brain.' After this paper was read an inevitable question arose. In Wesley's ' Agenda ' it appears in the form, ' How far shall each of us submit to the judgement of the majority? ' In the ' Minutes ' it stands as follows : ' How far does each of us agree to submit to the unanimous judgement of the rest? ' The answer was, ' In speculative things each can only submit so far as his judgement shall be convinced ; in every practical point, so far as we can without wounding our consciences.' It was then asked, ' How far should any of us mention to others what may be mentioned here? ' It was agreed, ' That not one word which may be here spoken of persons should be mentioned elsewhere. Nothing at all, unless so far as we may be convinced the glory of God requires it. And from time to time we will consider on each head, Is it for the glory of God that what we have now spoken should be mentioned again? ' We can find no reference to this further question in the ' Agenda,' but can quite

[1] *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iv., 122. On his appointment as the Governor of Didsbury College the present writer was introduced to the portrait. He said, ' Now I can understand the Methodist Reformation.' His companion told him that Dr. Alexander McLaren, on seeing the portrait for the first time, made the same remark.

understand why it arose. The decision explains the brevity of the references to the proceedings of the early Conferences in the *Journals* of the Wesleys, and the delay in the publication of the first printed *Minutes*.

Preliminary matters being settled, the Conference began its 'conversation' on the subjects concerning which the Wesleys desired advice. The order of the 'Agenda' was followed. The question 'What to teach?' was considered. A glance at the 'Agenda' and at the result of the 'conversation' shows that no attempt was made to compile a scheme of doctrine. All present accepted the Articles and the Homilies as their standards, but they were aware of two subjects on which it was alleged that the Methodist preachers taught doctrines which were not in accordance with the teaching of those standards. The doctrines were Justification by Faith and Sanctification. The members of the Conference approached the consideration of these subjects with an open mind. They were ready to admit that it was possible that their understanding of the doctrines was imperfect, and that their manner of teaching them might have led to misapprehension. When we consult the 'Agenda' we see that Wesley, in the calm retreat of his study, had jotted down at least twelve points in connexion with the doctrine of Justification by Faith which needed to be carefully examined. As men who were willing to be instructed and corrected the Conference, following the guidance of the Scriptures and the standards of their Church, proceeded to the examination of the great doctrines which were revolutionizing the moral and religious life of a large section of the English people.

The Bennet 'Minutes' contain a full report of the conclusions of the Conference on the doctrines of Justification and Sanctification. That report should be read carefully by those who wish to watch the emergence and development of formal statements concerning 'our doctrines,' as John Wesley was accustomed to call them, and as they are still called. At this point it will suffice if we indicate the main conclusions reached by the first Conference.

On the question of Justification it was agreed that to be justified meant 'to be pardoned and received into God's favour, and into such a state that, if we continue therein, we shall be finally saved.' It was declared that the condition of

Justification is faith, 'for every one who believeth not is condemned, and every one who believes is justified.' The Conference affirmed that repentance, and works meet for repentance, go before justifying faith, it being explained that 'by repentance was meant conviction of sin and by works meet for repentance obeying God as far as we can, forgiving our brother, leaving off from evil, doing good, and using His ordinances according to the power we have received.' After describing faith 'in general,' and pointing out that repentance is 'a low species of faith,' the Conference expressed the opinion that 'justifying faith is a supernatural inward sense, or sight, of God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.' The effect of such faith is then described in words that remind us of the profound experience of those who were present. 'First, a sinner is convinced by the Holy Ghost, "Christ loved me and gave Himself for me"; this is that faith by which he is justified, or pardoned, the moment he receives it. Immediately the same Spirit bears witness, "Thou art pardoned; thou hast redemption in His blood," and this is saving faith, whereby the love of God is shed abroad in his heart.' As to the immediate fruits of justifying faith, they are 'peace, joy, love, power over all outward sin, and power to keep down all inward sin.'

In answer to the questions, 'Have all true Christians this faith? May not a man be justified and not know it?' the following reply is given: 'That all true Christians have this faith, even such a faith as implies an assurance of God's love, appears from Rom. viii. 15, Eph. iv. 32, 2 Cor. xiii. 5, Heb. viii. 10, 1 John iv. 10, and last 1 John v. 19. And that no man can be justified and not know it appears farther from the very nature of things, for faith after repentance is ease after pain, rest after toil, light after darkness; and from the immediate as well as distant fruits.' That answer prompted another question which concerned the uninterrupted continuance of the assurance of God's love, and of the peace and joy arising from it. In the reply we are reminded of John Wesley's experience after his conversion. 'It is certain a believer need never again come into condemnation. It seems he need not come into a state of doubt, or fear, or darkness; and that, ordinarily at least, he will not, unless by ignorance and unfaithfulness. Yet it is true that the first joy does seldom last long, that it is

commonly followed by doubts and fears, and that God usually permits very great heaviness before any large manifestation of Himself.'

The Conference took up a strong position on the much disputed question of the necessity of good works. It was agreed that they were necessary for the continuance and the perfecting of faith. The seeming disagreement between the teaching of St. Paul and St. James was examined, and it was decided that the former speaks of works that precede faith, and St. James of works that spring from faith.

The imputation of Adam's sin, and the sense in which the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers, or all mankind, were the chief topics considered by the Conference during the rest of the first day's session. The decision on the latter question must be recorded. 'We do not find it affirmed expressly in Scripture that God imputes the righteousness of Christ to any, although we do find that faith is imputed unto us for righteousness. That text, "As by one man's disobedience all men were made sinners, so by the obedience of one all were made righteous," we conceive means, By the merits of Christ all men are cleared from the guilt of Adam's actual sin. We conceive further that through the obedience and death of Christ: (1) The bodies of all men become immortal after the Resurrection; (2) Their souls recover a capacity of spiritual life; (3) And an actual seed or spark thereof; (4) All believers become children of grace; (5) Are re-united to God; and (6) Made partakers of the divine nature.' We think it will be admitted that part of this answer lacks the clearness which characterizes the other replies of the Conference.

On the related subject of Antinomianism the Conference spoke with no uncertainty. It is defined as 'the doctrine which makes void the law through faith,' and its main pillars are '(1) That Christ abolished the moral law; (2) That Christians therefore are not obliged to observe it; (3) That one branch of Christian liberty is liberty from obeying the commandments of God; (4) That it is bondage to do a thing because it is commanded, or forbear it because it is forbidden; (5) That a believer is not obliged to use the ordinances of God, or to do good works; (6) That a preacher ought not to exhort to good works; not unbelievers, because it is hurtful, not believers, because it is needless.' This reply was suggested by

the bitter experience of the Wesleys ; it is, without doubt, an accurate statement of the views of extreme Antinomians at that time.

On Tuesday morning the Conference reassembled, and the conversation on doctrine was continued. In the Bennet 'Minutes' the report of the day's proceedings is much condensed. The subject considered was Sanctification. It will suffice to quote a few sentences which show the conclusions reached. It must be remembered that about this time the mind of John Wesley, according to his own confession, was much perplexed on the subject of Christian perfection. He saw the difficulties by which it was beset. Those difficulties were greatly increased by the common use of such a term as 'sinless perfection,' and other summary descriptions of the doctrine he taught. Proceeding with great caution, the Conference fixed its attention on the doctrines of 'Sanctification,' or present salvation, and 'Perfect Love.' It declared that to be 'sanctified' was to be renewed in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, and that faith was both the condition and instrument of it. It was explained that 'when we begin to believe, then salvation begins ; and, as faith increases, holiness increases, till we are created anew.' As to 'Perfect Love,' it meant loving the Lord our God with all our mind and soul and strength ; and such a condition implied that all inward sin is taken away ; or how could it be said of one who had been made perfect in love that he had been saved from all his uncleannesses ? After these definitions had been given it was asked, 'Can we know one that is thus saved ? What is a reasonable proof of it ?' The answer was, 'We cannot, without the miraculous discernment of spirits, be infallibly certain of those who are thus saved. But we apprehend these would be the best proofs which the nature of the thing admits (unless they should be called to resist unto blood) : (1) If we had sufficient evidence of their unblameable behaviour, at least from the time of their justification ; (2) If they give a distinct account of the time and manner wherein they were saved from sin, and of the circumstances thereof, with such sound speech as could not be reproved ; and (3) Upon a strict inquiry from time to time, for two or three years following, it appeared that all their tempers, words, and actions were holy and unreprovable.' It was decided that those who

think they have attained were to be exhorted ' to forget the things that are behind, to watch and pray always that God may search the ground of their hearts.' In reading the account of this part of the proceedings of Tuesday we are conscious of the presence of a spirit of restraint which held back the Conference from hastening to conclusions on a subject that needed to be illumined by clearer light from Scripture and experience.

On Wednesday, June 27, the Conference gave up the whole of the day to the consideration of the question of the relation of the Methodists to the Church of England. The beginning of ' the parting of the ways ' was in sight even in those far-distant times, and the members of the Conference wished to know where they stood and whither they were going. Consulting the ' Agenda,' we note the following items with interest : ' You are zealous *for the Church* ? What do you mean ? What is the Church of England ? How are we of it ? How far to defend it ? To obey the Bishops ? The injunctions ? Canons ? ' Reading between these lines, we see that John Wesley had carefully buoyed out the course of the discussion before the Conference had assembled. He knew that the subject would arise. The situation created by the conduct of the clergy in Wednesbury, Cornwall, Yorkshire, and elsewhere had to be faced ; the ' ministers' mobs ' had made it impossible for the Conference to ignore the subject.

In his *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* John Wesley had given an answer to the question, ' What is the visible Church of Christ ? ' Following the leading of the Nineteenth Article, the Conference agreed that ' the visible Church of England is the congregation of English believers in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered.' It added to this description the cautionary declaration, ' But the word Church is sometimes taken in a looser sense for a congregation professing to believe.' In support of this declaration the Twenty-sixth Article, ' Of the unworthiness of the ministers which hinder not the effect of the sacraments,' and the first, second, and third chapters of the Revelation, are indicated. Proceeding with definitions, the Conference agreed that a member of the Church of England was ' a believer, hearing the pure word of God preached, and partaking of the sacraments, duly administered in this Church.'

It also defined 'being zealous for the Church' as 'to be earnestly desirous of its welfare, by the confirmation of its present members in faith, hearing, and communicating; of its increase by the addition of new members'; and expressed its opinion that the way to defend the doctrines of the Church was 'by preaching and living.'

The Conference then began an examination of some of the Articles of the Church of England to see if they agreed with Scripture. Article viii., 'Of the Three Creeds'; xiii., 'Of Works before Justification'; xv., 'Of Christ alone without Sin'; xvi., 'Of Sin after Baptism'; xvii., 'Of Predestination and Election'; xxi., 'Of the Authority of General Councils'; xxiii., 'Of Ministering in the Congregation'; and xxvii., 'Of Baptism,' were considered. Those who are familiar with these Articles will understand why they were selected. They contain statements which had emerged in the course of the work of the Wesleys, and it was necessary that they should be investigated in the light of the Scriptures. It is significant that the decisions of the Conference on the points in question are not recorded in the Bennet 'Minutes.'

The Conference then considered the question, 'How far is it our duty to obey the Bishops?' The answer is important. Almost without exception, the Bishops were hostile to the work of the Wesleys and wished to end it. Absolute obedience to them was impossible. We do not wonder that the Conference replied that its duty of obedience was confined to 'all things indifferent.' The Wesleys and their associates were conscious that there was a point beyond which they must not be pressed by the Bishops. They were ready to obey them in all matters that did not jeopardize their work; if that were stopped then the voice of conscience was to be obeyed, and the penalties of disobedience must be borne. We can understand their decision, but it is unquestionable that it increased the probability of a separation of the Methodists from the Church 'by law established.'

The answer to the question concerning obedience to the Bishops went farther. It concludes with the sentence, 'And on this ground of obeying them we should observe the Canons, so far as we can with a safe conscience.' This reference to the Canons casts light on the difficulties that beset the Wesleys in carrying on their work; it also helps us to understand their

non-committal attitude towards the Bishops. If the Canons were to be absolutely obeyed, could the Conference have been held? Let us examine the eleventh and twelfth Canons: 'Whosoever shall hereafter affirm or maintain that there are within this realm other meetings, assemblies, or congregations of the King's born subjects, than such as by the laws of this land are held and allowed, which may rightly challenge to themselves the name of true and lawful churches, let him be excommunicated, and not restored, but by the Archbishop, after his repentance, and public revocation of such his wicked errors.' The twelfth Canon reads: 'Whosoever shall hereafter affirm that it is lawful for any sort of ministers and lay persons, or either of them, to join together, and make rules, orders, or constitutions, in causes ecclesiastical, without the King's authority, and shall submit themselves to be ruled and governed by them; let them be excommunicated *ipso facto*, and not be restored until they repent, and publicly revoke those their wicked and Anabaptistical errors.'[1] In 1744 these Canons were in existence, and we can imagine that hostile Bishops could have used them in an attack on the discussions in the Conference on the nature of the Church of England, the examination of the Articles, and the making of 'rules, or constitutions' which was part of the business transacted. If they had done so, we are sure that Wesley would have held on his way, guided by the light of his conscience.

From the records of the first Conference it is clear that Wesley and his associates were aware that they were getting within sight of a possible 'separation' from the Church of England. In fact, the question was definitely raised. It was asked, 'Do we separate from the Church?' The answer to this and other questions on the subject are so important in their bearing on the future that they must be fully given.

Q. 9. Do we separate from the Church?

A. We conceive not. We hold communion therewith for conscience' sake, by constant attending both the word preached and the sacraments administered therein.

Q. 10. What, then, do they mean who say, You separate from the Church?

[1] These Canons must be read in the light of the year when they were adopted, that is, the year 1603; but when the Canons were revised in 1865 and 1888 they were allowed to remain.

A. We cannot certainly tell. Perhaps they have no determinate meaning; unless by the Church they mean themselves, i.e. that part of the clergy who accuse us of preaching false doctrine. And it is sure we do herein separate from them, by maintaining the doctrine which they deny.

Q. 11. But do you not weaken the Church?

A. Do not they who ask this by the Church mean themselves? We do not purposely weaken any man's hands, but accidentally we may thus far—they who come to know the truth by us will esteem such as deny it less than they did before. But the Church, in the proper sense, the congregation of English believers, we do not weaken at all.

Q. 12. Do you not entail a schism on the Church; i.e. is it not probable that your hearers after your death will be scattered into all sects and parties? or that they will form themselves into a distinct sect?

A. 1. We are persuaded the body of our hearers will, even after our death, remain in the Church, unless they be thrust out. 2. We believe notwithstanding either that they will be thrust out, or that they will leaven the whole Church. 3. We do, and will do, all we can to prevent those consequences which are supposed likely to happen after our death. 4. But we cannot with good conscience neglect the present opportunity of saving souls while we live, for fear of consequences which may possibly or probably happen after we are dead.

It would have saved much controversy on the question of the Churchmanship of John Wesley if the disputants had been acquainted with the transactions of the first Conference. To the end of his life he held the opinions expressed in the foregoing resolutions. So long as he held communion with the Church 'by constantly attending both the word preached, and the sacraments administered therein,' he declared that he, personally, had not separated from it. He applied the same standard to the Methodists in general, and used all his influence to persuade them to follow his example. But as a practical man he saw the difficulties in their way. He knew that the furious persecutions that were raging in many parts of the country were bound to have their effect, and he anticipated the possibility of the exhaustion of the patience of his people.[1] He feared that they would be 'thrust out' of the Church, but conscience told him that he must not abandon his work through fear of consequences which might arise in the future. Fortunately he was true to his maxim: 'Church or no Church, we must save souls.'

[1] The possibility of standing 'as a distinct body from our brethren' was suggested by John Wesley in his proposed *Address to the King*, prepared in March, 1744.

In *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, and in preceding pages of this book, we have been careful to record circumstances and arrangements that influenced the development of the organization of the early Methodist Societies. The proceedings of the first Conference at the sessions of Thursday and Friday enable us to get a better view of the condition of that organization in 1744. When we consider it we are impressed with the rapidity of the progress made since 1739, and, still more, with the wisdom of arrangements which have borne the sharp tests of nearly two centuries.

In 1744 the people who had placed themselves under the care of John and Charles Wesley were arranged into the following groups: 'The United Societies,' 'The Bands,' 'The Select Societies,' and 'The Penitents.' The United Societies, the largest of all, consisted of 'awakened persons.' Then the members of the United Societies who were supposed to have remission of sins were gathered into the Bands. Those in the Bands 'who seemed to walk in the light of God' composed, in some places, the Select Societies. Members of these sections who had made 'shipwreck of the faith' met apart as Penitents. With the exception of the Penitents, each section of the larger Society had its own special rules. These rules were read to the Conference, and there is no record of any objections being raised to their contents.

The officers of the Societies were the Ministers, the Assistants, the Stewards, the Leaders of Bands, the Leaders of Classes, the Visitors of the Sick, the Schoolmasters, and the Housekeepers. A special description of the office of a minister, that is, of a clergyman, is given. He had 'to watch over the souls whom God commits to his charge, as he that must give an account.' It was asked, 'What is it to be moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon yourself this office?' The reply is, 'It can mean no less than to be immediately convinced by the Spirit of God that it is His will.'

After the questions concerning the Societies and their officers had been answered, the lawfulness of field preaching was considered. In the opinion of the Conference it was not contrary to any law, either of God or man. The reasons for this opinion are not given, but the statement is made that, to avoid any needless offence, 'We never preach without doors when we can with any convenience preach within.'

The answer to the question, ' Where should we endeavour to preach most ? ' has special significance. Those who have followed John Wesley's career step by step, and have watched the workings of his mind, are aware that he was sometimes tempted to limit his constant itinerancy. The thought came to him that he ought to spend more time on the literary defence of Methodism, and that it would be wiser to concentrate his work on a few neighbourhoods rather than to spread it over the whole country. Detecting this tendency, we have comforted ourselves with the reflection that there was no solid ground for our fears. But the evidence of the ' Agenda ' is irresistible. Sitting in his study in Newcastle, Wesley wrote down the following notes for the approaching Conference : ' Where should we preach ? Do we not undertake too much ; and thereby do less than we might ? Are not more sinners converted [if] we stay a month at Newcastle than by preaching in any new place ? Is it not necessary to spend more time there ? At Epworth ? Where else ? In Wales ? Should we not preach more where we have Churches ? Where there is peace ? Should we not eye this more as to the places and times of preaching ? Should we preach *abroad* when we may preach within doors ? Should we fix any more Societies ? Or overrun England ? How ? When ? '[1]

It may be said that the interrogations of Wesley only reveal the activity of an inquiring mind, but we are not satisfied with that explanation. Ceasing to theorize, let us see what the Conference decided in answer to the question, ' Where should we endeavour to preach most ? ' It is as follows : ' (1) Where we can preach in the church ; (2) Where there is an open door, quiet and willing hearers ; (3) Where there is the greatest increase of souls.' The result of the deliberations of the Conference on the points raised by Wesley was a declaration that ' the best way of spreading the gospel was to go a little and a little farther from London, Bristol, St. Ives, Newcastle, or any other Society. So a little leaven would spread with more effect and less noise, and help would always be at hand.' It cannot be doubted that Wesley's hesitation was shared by the Conference, and that, at least for a time, mobs were to be avoided, and the Methodist preachers were to concentrate

[1] We are indebted to Mr. Riggall for the elucidation of some of the abbreviations in Richard Viney's copy of Wesley's ' Agenda.'

their work on comparatively peaceful neighbourhoods. It is fortunate for 'the world-parish' of Wesley that this policy was not pursued.

On Friday, June 29, the Conference resumed its consideration of questions of discipline. The 'conversations' of the day were of exceptional importance. The first subject considered concerned the Lay Preachers who were associated with Wesley in his evangelizing work. At that time they were called his Lay Assistants. In Myles's *Chronological History of the People called Methodists* there is a list of 'the first race of Methodist Preachers from the year 1739 to 1765.'[1] Consulting it, we find that in 1744 there were thirty-five laymen who were itinerant preachers. There were also at least three 'local preachers'; that is, men who assisted Wesley 'in one place.' In the presence of this fact the Conference had to face the question, 'Are Lay Assistants allowable?'[2] We know nothing of the course of the discussion, but the decision was, 'Only in cases of necessity.' If allowable in such cases, the Conference was of opinion that their office should be defined, and that rules should be drawn up for their guidance.

The Conference agreed on the following summary of the duties of Assistants: 'In the absence of the Minister to feed and guide, to teach and govern the flock. 1. To expound every morning and evening. 2. To meet the United Societies, the Bands, the Select Societies, and the Penitents every week. 3. To visit the classes (London and Bristol excepted) once a month. 4. To hear and decide all differences. 5. To put the disorderly back on trial, and to receive on trial for the Bands, or Society. 6. To see that the Stewards and the Leaders, Schoolmasters, and Housekeepers faithfully discharge their several offices. 7. To meet the Stewards, the Leaders of the Bands and Classes weekly, and overlook their accounts.'

The 'Rules of an Assistant' are given at length in the Bennet 'Minutes.' In a few years they were revised and assumed the shape of the 'Twelve Rules of a Helper,' a document familiar to all Methodist ministers. When the revision took place two 'rules' were omitted. We reproduce them, as they cast light on a problem which often confronts us when

[1] See *History*, 446–449, 4th ed.

[2] In the 'Agenda' Wesley calls them 'lay helpers.' In a few years it became necessary to use the names 'lay assistant' and 'lay helper' to indicate two kinds of lay preachers.

reading the history of early Methodism. In the first edition the ninth rule is as follows: 'Take no money of any one. If they give you food when you are hungry, or clothes when you need them, it is good. But not silver or gold. Let there be no pretence to say we grow rich by the gospel.' The tenth rule is: 'Contract no debt without my knowledge.' These stringent regulations increase our respect for the self-denying preachers who, in the morning of Methodism, assisted in laying the strong foundations of the Methodist Church. At the call of conscience, out of pity for the souls of men, urged by the constraining love of Christ, these pioneers did their hazardous work without monetary reward. Having food and raiment, they were therewith content. The people, in many cases out of their deep poverty, provided for their daily wants, and in the background stood John Wesley, ever ready to give help when it was absolutely necessary. That help was given, not only out of money collected from rich men who trusted him for its right distribution, but also out of his own personal resources.

Having agreed on the 'Rules of an Assistant,' and advised that all of them should keep Journals, 'as well for our satisfaction as for the profit of their own souls,' the Conference proceeded to 'fix where each labourer should be (if God permits) until the Conference met again.' It was intended that the next meetings should be held at Newcastle on November 1, at Bristol on February 1, and at London on the first of May. This arrangement was not carried out, and the regulating of the 'stations' of the preachers had to be undertaken by John Wesley until the Conference met in Bristol in August, 1745.

The Conference then defined the office of a steward, and laid down rules for his guidance. It was his duty to manage the temporal things of the Society; to receive the weekly contributions of the leaders of the classes; to expend what was needful from time to time; to send relief to the poor; to see that the public buildings were kept in good repair; to keep an exact account of receipts and expenses; to inform the Helpers if the rules of the house, of the schools, of the bands, or of the Society had not been punctually performed, and, if need be, to inform the Minister thereof; to tell the Helpers, in love, if they thought anything was amiss in their doctrine or life, and, if it were not removed, then to send timely notice to

the Minister; and, finally, to meet his fellow steward weekly, in order to consult together on 'the preceding heads.' In the 'Rules of a Steward' he is warned not to expect any thanks from man, and is reminded that he is a servant of the Helper and not his master, and, therefore, he is to 'speak to him always as such.'[1]

The business of a visitor of the sick was also defined. As to that of a leader of a band, the Conference declared that it was set down in the 'Rules of the Bands,' as was the business of a class-leader in the 'Rules of the Society.'

It is a striking fact that, at the first Conference, the question was asked, 'Can we have a seminary for labourers?' The answer was, 'If God spare us until another Conference.' It has sometimes been alleged that 'the first race' of Methodist preachers consisted of uneducated men, and that John Wesley employed them because he could obtain none other to do the rough work of the itinerancy. We find it difficult to reconcile that statement with the answer of the Conference to the question, 'What books may an Assistant read?' The Greek Testament, and more than a dozen books of Latin and Greek authors, appear in the list. The names include Virgil, Horace, Epictetus, Plato, and Homer. Wesley's idealism may have carried him too far, but he never lowered it. He expected that his lay preachers should study the best books; if they would not, he plainly told them that he had no further need of their services.

The remaining business of the session must be summarized. The times for holding watch-nights, letter-days, and love-feasts at London, Bristol, and Newcastle were fixed. As to letter-days, it may be explained that in the Society meetings the Wesleys were accustomed to read letters relating the progress of 'the work' in different parts of the country, and communications describing the advance of spiritual religion through the instrumentality of other churches. The latter were read in order that the Methodists might not suppose 'they were doing all the good that was being done in the world.' The Conference made arrangements for the supply of Methodist correspondence. It was agreed that once a month Wesley was to write to each Assistant, and to some other person, at least,

[1] Circuit, Society, and Poor Stewards were not then in existence; the 'Stewards' in the different places managed 'the temporal things of the Society.' The use of the word 'Helper' for 'Assistant' must also be noted.

in each Society, so keeping in touch with all the Societies in the country. In addition to this correspondence it was arranged that John Wesley should write a *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, and abridge certain specified books. We especially note that, in addition, sixteen sermons were to be abridged and printed. There can be little doubt that in this direction of the Conference we catch sight of the reason of the publication of the first of the well-known 'four volumes' of *Sermons*. Our conviction is strengthened by the statement of Mr. Green in his *Bibliography*. The circular containing the proposal for printing three volumes of Wesley's *Sermons* by subscription is dated September 7, 1745, and in it the hope is expressed that the 'first volume will be in the press about Michaelmas, and delivered to the subscribers at or before Christmas.' The 'first volume' was dated 1746.

The disturbed condition of the country is revealed by two other decisions of the Conference. The first relates to national affairs. The Conference, after considering the subject, was inclined to think that it was lawful 'to bear arms,' the reason for the conclusion being, 'first, because there is no command against it in the New Testament; and next, because Cornelius, a soldier, is commended there, and not mentioned to have laid them down.' The persecution of the Methodists evoked another question, 'Is it lawful to use the law?' The answer shows signs of hesitation: 'As defendant, doubtless. And perhaps as plaintiff in some cases, seeing magistrates are an ordinance of God.' The question appears in Wesley's 'Agenda' with the notes 'Cornwall? Wednesbury?' It is, therefore, clear that question and answer refer to mob assaults. It is always difficult to understand Wesley's reluctance to proceed against rioters by an appeal to the law. Our difficulty is increased when we remember that on May 1, 1744, he had published an account of Whitefield's letter describing the serious riots at Minchin Hampton, near Stroud, in Gloucestershire, in July, 1743. Whitefield's people there had been shamefully assailed, but the damage done to persons and property was not comparable to that inflicted on the Methodists of Wednesbury. Whitefield had taken a bold step, and five of the ringleaders of the mob had been tried at the Gloucester Assizes in March 3, 1744. They were found guilty, and the assessing of the damages was referred

to the King's Bench. The magistrates had refused to interfere, but redress had been obtained by an appeal to a higher authority.[1] The Conference, however, hesitated to recommend that this example should be followed.

On Saturday, June 30, the Conference closed. The question of uniting with the Moravians was raised; but as the Moravians absolutely declined to enter into a conference on the subject, the matter was dismissed. It was arranged that when Whitefield returned to London a conference should be proposed to him. The question of mending 'our economy in temporal things' was mentioned, and it was decided that the subject should be considered with the stewards.

The intervals between the sessions of the Conference were pleasantly employed. The clergy, the lay preachers, and others were entertained at the 'town house' of the Earl of Huntingdon, which stood in Downing Street. The public offices have now swallowed up all the private residences, and the aspect of the street is entirely changed. Wandering through it to-day the imagination is busy. The Georgian Downing Street rises before us. It is a summer evening. We hear in one of the great houses the sound of the singing of a sacred song, then a clear voice speaking. It is the voice of John Wesley, who is preaching to the Huntingdon household and the members of the Methodist Conference! Is it possible that a 'conventicle' is being held in Downing Street? Our fears are aroused lest the service should be interrupted. Then, to our relief, memory whispers to us words of consolation. We call to mind the tenth clause of the Conventicle Act of 1670. It provides 'that no dwelling-house of any peer of this realm, where he or his wife shall then be resident, shall be searched by virtue of this Act, but by immediate warrant from His Majesty, under his sign manual, or in the presence of the lieutenant, or one deputy-lieutenant, or two Justices of the Peace, whereof one to be of the quorum of the same county or riding.' Encouraged by this sheltering clause we venture to join the company. The preacher is discoursing from the text, 'What hath God wrought?' He speaks like a man who is firmly convinced that he and those associated with him are only instruments in the divine hand, and that the results of their work are produced, not by themselves, but by the might

[1] See Tyerman's *Life of George Whitefield*, ii., 65–67, 87.

of the Spirit of God. Speaking of the ever-increasing success of the mission, he cries, 'It is the work of God!' Stealing away, and walking along Downing Street, that phrase rings in our ears. It has become 'a household word' among the Methodists; it is their all-sufficient 'apology' for their fathers and themselves.

XV

A FAREWELL SERMON

On July 9, 1744, Charles Wesley and his 'friend and companion,' John Meriton, set out on their way to Cornwall. They stayed in Bristol for two days, and then rode onward. Mr. Bennett, of Laneast, met them at Sticklepath and guided them to his house. He had been sent by Mr. Thomson, of St. Gennys, who wanted to see them, being deeply interested in the Methodist work in Cornwall. On Sunday, July 15, Mr. Bennett conducted the travellers to St. Gennys. The village lies on the wild Atlantic coast, between Tintagel and Bude. In Mr. Hayman's *Methodism in North Devon* we catch sight of the village. We see the little, low, weather-worn church crouching behind a hillock and the few trees which give it a slight shelter from the western gales. It stands on the verge of the steep cliffs; we hear the roar of the breakers on the rocks far beneath us. Mr. Thomson received his guests 'with open arms'; and, on the following day, Charles Wesley preached twice in the church. He must have felt that a new era was dawning in Cornwall. The glow of his pleasure radiates from his *Journal.* The following day he read prayers and preached in Mr. Bennett's church. These opportunities of assisting his brother clergymen in their own churches filled his heart with delight.

After their pleasant visit to the north-west corner of Cornwall Charles Wesley, with Mr. Bennett and Mr. Meriton, rode southward. Late at night they found themselves among the pits and shafts of the mines near Gwennap. Picking their way in the darkness, they reached the house where they were to be entertained. They were soon gladdened by the news of the progress of religion in the neighbourhood. Speaking of Gwennap, Charles Wesley says, 'Here a little one is become a thousand. What an amazing work hath God done in one year! The whole country is alarmed, and gone forth after the sound of the gospel. In vain do the pulpits ring of

"Popery, madness, enthusiasm." Our preachers are daily pressed to new places, and enabled to preach five or six times a day. Persecution is kept off till the seed takes root. Societies are springing up everywhere, and still the cry from all sides is, "Come and help us." ' The next morning he commenced the day by preaching near Gwennap to nearly a thousand 'followers of Christ.' Meeting the Society after the service, he found almost the whole congregation waiting quietly without the door, longing to be admitted with the rest. He stood at the window of the house so that his words of exhortation might be heard by all. The following morning at five o'clock he found the same congregation, and preached to the multitude. The meeting of the Society was of a more private character; he spoke to each member 'as their state required.' Then he breakfasted with a woman who, when he was last in that part of the country, had been 'a fierce persecutor, but had become a witness of the truth she had so bitterly opposed.' Leaving Gwennap, he preached at Crowan to between one and two thousand tinners, 'who seemed started out of the earth.' He watched their faces, saw that several of them were deeply affected, and hoped he had not spoken in vain. He concluded the service by exhorting the people 'to continue in the ship, the shattered, sinking Church of England'; and Mr. Meriton, following on the same lines, confirmed what he had said. Then they set their faces towards a hostile country.

Charles Wesley tells us that in St. Ives the rioters and ministers together had pulled down the preaching-house. A short time before his visit the mob had gone round 'in the dead of night and broke the windows of all that were only suspected of Christianity.' When one of the Methodist women went to the Mayor and complained that her house had been attacked, and that heavy stones, which had been thrown through the window, had fallen on the pillow within a few inches of her little child, his Worship damned her, and said, 'You shall have no justice here,' and drove her out of his house. The conduct of the new Mayor, so different from that of his predecessor, encouraged the rioters and increased the difficulties of the Methodists. Charles Wesley was ready to face the dangers that threatened him, but during this visit to the town he was not seriously assaulted. To his surprise his adversary the curate saluted him courteously. The presence

of Mr. Meriton was helpful. It appears that his stature and clerical band kept the mob in awe. The would-be rioters scowled at the two clergymen and threw a few stones, but did no harm to either of them. It seemed that a change was gradually coming over the spirit of the place. The most powerful influence in subduing the outrages of the persecutors in other parts of the country, during the time of which we are writing, was the consistent lives of the Methodist people. That influence was beginning to win the victory in Cornwall.

During this visit Charles Wesley and Mr. Meriton went the 'round' of the St. Ives circuit. On Sunday, July 29, they held, for the first time, a love-feast in St. Ives. At Morvah they found that the people were beginning to build a Society-house. Approving their enterprise, Charles Wesley knelt down upon the place and prayed for a blessing. At Gulval he admitted new members, 'particularly one who had been the greatest persecutor in all this country.' At St. Just he found upwards of two hundred members 'settled in classes.' On Sunday, July 22, he and Mr. Meriton went to church and noticed that it was crowded with Methodists. Dr. Borlase's curate at St. Just was looked upon by the clergy of the neighbourhood as 'half a Methodist,' simply because he did not rail at the members of the Society. He excited the ill-will of his clerical brethren, but was well recompensed by the presence of great congregations in his church. Instead of driving away the Methodists from the sacrament he welcomed them, and they knelt in peace at the table of the Lord. He was a good and sagacious man. If his example had been followed the influence of the Church of England in Cornwall would have been strengthened. As we watch Charles Wesley going about the St. Ives 'circuit' we see that the Methodist Societies were being organized after the pattern of those in London, Bristol, Newcastle, and other parts of the country. The better organization was assisting to produce the results for which churches exist.

Charles Wesley's *Journal* reveals the interesting fact that at this time there was a Methodist Society in the neighbourhood of Penzance. On July 24 he says, 'I have preached near Penzance to the little flock encompassed by ravening wolves. Their minister rages above measure against this new sect, who

are spread throughout his four livings. His reverend brethren follow his example. The grossest lies which are brought them they swallow without examination, and retail the following Sunday. One of the Society, James Dale, went lately to the Worshipful and Rev. Dr. Borlase for justice against a rioter who had broke open his house and stole his goods. The doctor's answer was, " Thou conceited fellow, art thou too turned religious? They may burn thy house if they will; thou shalt have no justice." With these words he drove him from the judgement-seat.' On July 30 Charles Wesley returned to Mount's Bay. He says, ' I cried to a mixed multitude of wakened and unawakened sinners near Penzance, " Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? " I prayed with the still increasing flock, whose greatest persecutor is their minister. He and the clergy of these parts are much enraged at our people's being so ready in the Scriptures. One fairly told Jonathan Reeves he wished the Bible were in Latin only, that none of the vulgar might be able to read it. Yet these are the men that rail at us as Papists! ' The next day he expounded the incident of the woman of Canaan ' to a houseful of sincere souls, who had sat up all night to hear the word in the morning.' He also spoke with some ' who had tasted the good word of grace though they live in Penzance, where Satan keeps his seat.'

Going to St. Just, Charles Wesley and Mr. Meriton exhilarated themselves with cliff-climbing. To ' the needless hazard of their necks ' they explored Cape Cornwall, clambering up and down while the great waves broke on the rocks beneath them. It is pleasant to catch sight of them in the light of that summer morning as they breast the steeps of Cape Cornwall and toil along the slippery tracks. Made young again by his adventure, Charles Wesley preached at St. Just in the afternoon to a larger congregation than ever, and continued his discourse until the evening shades prevailed. The next day he preached in a new place to nearly two thousand ' listening strangers.' To them he proclaimed ' Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' After the service he returned to St. Ives, and found to his delight that Mr. Thomson had come from St. Gennys to see him and the Society. The arrival of Mr. Thomson alarmed the persecutors. He was highly respected in Cornwall, and his espousal of the cause of the harassed flock

was of eminent service at this critical time. The Methodists of St. Ives were strengthened by his brief visit. The next morning they gathered to say 'farewell' to him, and to Charles Wesley and Mr. Meriton. The spectacle of three 'Methodist' clergymen standing together had never been previously witnessed in St. Ives, and we can easily imagine the emotion it excited. Then the travellers mounted their horses and went on their way.

Whither were the three evangelists of the new era going? They were riding eastward to Falmouth to commence a campaign on the shores of the harbour that is one of the glories of Cornwall. News of their coming had preceded them. They pulled bridle at a large house, a gentleman's seat near Penryn, at which they were to stay. Lifting up their eyes they saw the people coming from Falmouth and all parts. The crowd flocked into the courtyard, where the service was to be held. It would accommodate two thousand persons, and was filled. Standing in a gallery, Charles Wesley preached. With upturned faces the people listened to the word of life. Describing the scene, Charles Wesley says, 'Even the gentlemen and ladies listened while I preached repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus Christ.' After proclaiming the gospel, he followed his frequent practice and exhorted his hearers in many words to attend to all the ordinances of the Church; to submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; and to stop the mouth of gainsayers by fearing God and honouring the King; urging them also 'to prevent the judgements hanging over the nation by a general reformation.' Such were the counsels often given by the Wesleys to the Methodists in their Societies, and also to the multitudes gathered around them in the open air.

With reluctance Charles Wesley realized that for the present his mission to Cornwall was coming to an end. Other voices were calling him away. But his work was not quite done. He left Penryn with his companions and rode to Gwennap. The awakening there was general. The effect of the revival of religion was undeniable,and was almost universally admitted. At the last Assizes there was not one felon to be found in the prisons. Such a thing had not been known before 'in the memory of man.'[1] The 'revels' of Cornwall were notorious

[1] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, i., 375.

for their accompaniments of drunkenness and immorality. In Gwennap, at their last 'revel,' the wrestling match had been abandoned, as all the Gwennap men had struck their names off the list. With a thankful heart Charles Wesley heard the news of the social and moral reformation that was proceeding among the tinners. He knew what had taken place at Kingswood, and recognized the signs of the coming of a great revival. He preached his farewell sermon at Gwennap on Sunday, August 5, to an innumerable multitude. He spoke for two hours, and did not know how to let the people go. Mr. Thomson was astonished at the sorrow and the love expressed by the crowd when the service came to an end. He had never seen the like before. It was with great difficulty that Charles Wesley and his companions got through the mass of people and set out on their journey. When they were beyond the multitude they noticed that several men and women kept pace with their horses for two or three miles. Then they said farewell, parting 'in body, not in spirit.'

Returning to Laneast, Charles Wesley preached in Mr. Bennett's church on 'Repent ye, therefore, and be converted.' The service is memorable because of the occurrence of an incident which has been much misrepresented. The preacher in the course of his sermon dealt with the subject of so-called 'harmless diversions,' and declared that by them 'he had been kept dead to God, asleep in the devil's arms, secure in a state of damnation, for eighteen years.' At this point Mr. Meriton said aloud, 'And I for twenty-five.' Mr. Thomson cried, 'And I for thirty-five,' and Mr. Bennett said, 'And I for above seventy.' These testimonies deeply affected the congregation. When Charles Wesley proceeded to denounce the drunkenness that disgraced the 'revels' a man in the congregation 'contradicted and blasphemed.' Pausing in his sermon, the preacher asked, 'Who is he who pleads for the devil?' The man instantly replied, 'I am he that pleads for the devil.' Directing his remarks to the interrupter, Charles Wesley spoke out his mind concerning the opinions of the avowed 'devil's advocate.' The man was silenced and left the church. There can be no doubt that the service at this stage was open to the charge of being disorderly, but the use that has been made of the incident is unwarrantable. The critics have alleged that it proves the wisdom of the clergy of that day who

excluded the Wesleys from their churches. To draw such a conclusion from a single incident is an unsafe mode of reasoning. On the next day Charles Wesley preached in the Tresmere church to a thronged audience, in which there were gentry who had come eighteen miles ' to hear the word, and received it with joy.' The following day he preached in St. Gennys church, and had the pleasure of meeting a clergyman who lived in the neighbourhood, who was an Oxford man, one of his contemporaries at Christ Church, who had come ' in much love ' to invite him to his house. Neither at Tresmere nor at St. Gennys was there any ' disorder.' As a matter of fact, the services conducted by the Wesleys in parish churches were distinguished by their high tone and deep reverence.

On August 9 Charles Wesley rode to Brynsworthy, near Barnstaple, an estate which belonged to Mr. Thomson. Then he made his way to Minehead, where he was to embark for Wales. Looking across the years, we see the original Minehead—a group of fishermen's cottages standing near the shore. Mr. J. Ll. W. Page, in his *Exmoor and the Hill Country of West Somerset*, has traced the growth of the town. In the eighteenth century it had become a place of considerable importance. A convenient harbour had been built, and from it ships sailed that carried on a profitable cattle-trade with Ireland. Charles Wesley, as we have said, was on his way to Wales, and in the harbour there was a sloop that often crossed the Severn Sea. It was owned by Mr. Forrest, a brother of Mrs. Jones, of Fonmon Castle. Mr. Forrest was expecting Charles Wesley, and Mrs. Jones was waiting for him on the other side. When he arrived in Minehead he preached to about a thousand people who flocked to hear him ; then, on August 11, he went on board the sloop, set sail, and, after a delightful passage, landed in the little creek of Aberthaw, where he was welcomed by Mrs. Jones, her three children, and some of the Cardiff Methodists. After spending about a week preaching and visiting the Societies in Wales, he made his way to Bristol.

It is with reluctance that we turn from the moorlands and the expanses of the Atlantic to the streets and crowds of London, but it is necessary to refer once more to an unpleasant subject. The accusations of Thomas Williams against the character and conduct of the Wesleys were accepted as true by a considerable

number of people. They were urged with persistence, and did great mischief. The charges were directed more especially against Charles Wesley, and when he reached Cardiff he heard news that depressed him. He did not possess the equable temper of his brother. His nature answered quickly to sunshine and to the shadows of passing clouds. The charges brought against him by Williams, whom he had loved ' as his own soul,' cut him to the quick. In his letters to his brother his ' raven note,' as he calls it, sounds more frequently from this time onward. It is not surprising, for Williams' accusations spread through the Societies from Cornwall to Newcastle. Anticipating the progress of events, we may say that the rumours reached the ears of the Bishop of London, who was tempted to believe there might be some truth in them. He sent a message to Lady Huntingdon, which was communicated to Charles Wesley on January 26, 1745. It was to the effect that if the accused would come to him and declare his innocency touching the scandals, and ' take the sacrament upon it,' no further satisfaction would be desired. If these conditions were fulfilled then the Bishop would clear him. Charles Wesley immediately consented to these terms, and let his brother know. For more than six months these miserable charges dogged his footsteps, interfering constantly with his work. In the light of the fact that Thomas Williams had written a letter on December 2, 1744, in which he absolutely withdrew his accusations against the Wesleys, we may think that the interference of the Bishop of London might have been spared.

Turning from this disagreeable incident we pass into a brighter atmosphere. On August 14, when Charles Wesley was still in Wales, we catch sight of John Wesley and his old friend Mr. Piers, of Bexley, riding through the leafy ways of Kent. Reaching Shoreham, they alighted at the Parsonage, and were greeted by the vicar, Vincent Perronet. He was an Oxford man who had entered into Holy Orders when he was twenty-four years of age. After serving for about nine years as a curate at Sundridge, in Kent, he became the vicar of Shoreham, and continued there for upwards of fifty years. He is a conspicuous figure in the Methodist Revival, and stands out clearly as a friend of the Wesleys in days of storm and in the sunshine of their ultimate triumph. His

wise counsels were often sought by them. It is no wonder that in after years he was familiarly called 'The Archbishop of the Methodists.' When he conversed with John Wesley on that August day in 1744 he knew little about the Methodists, and the information he possessed had led him to view them with some amount of prejudice. But that prejudice was not invincible. His interview with Wesley convinced him of the advantages of keeping an 'open mind,' and he determined to suspect rumour and inquire for himself. Wesley was charmed with him. In his *Journal* he says, 'I hope to have cause of blessing God for ever for the acquaintance begun this day.'

On Friday, August 24, being St. Bartholomew's Day, John and Charles Wesley, with their friends Mr. Piers and Mr. Meriton, walked through the streets of Oxford on their way to St. Mary's, where John Wesley was to preach before the University. He rightly conjectured that it was for the last time. There was a crowded audience. The Vice-Chancellor, the proctors, most of the heads of houses, a large number of gownsmen, and a multitude of private people, many of whom were Methodists, were present. Charles Wesley says, 'Never have I seen a more attentive congregation. They did not let a word slip them.' He tells us that some of the 'Heads' stood up the whole time, and fixed their eyes on the preacher. To an instructed eye, the attendance of the Vice-Chancellor and the proctors was ominous. We notice among the crowd a Wadham undergraduate, subsequently well known as Dr. Kennicott. He had no sympathy with the Methodists, but no one can read his description of the service without being impressed with its fairness.[1] The sermon was on 'Scriptural Christianity,' the text being, 'And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost' (Acts iv. 31). It appears in the *Standard Sermons* and is so well known that it is only necessary to indicate some of its chief points. The preacher considered Christianity in its rise, as beginning to exist in individuals; next, as spreading from one to another, and so gradually making its way into the world. He then drew a beautiful picture of the time when Scriptural Christianity would prevail over the earth. In dealing with these topics he was in his element. Making continual quotations from the Bible, he

[1] See Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, i., 449.

described the life of the Church in apostolic times. Then he gave the result of his close reading and thinking on the subject of the progress of Christianity through the succeeding ages. He was a firm believer in the ultimate triumph of Scriptural Christianity, and his hearers listened intently as he disclosed the glories of a Christian world. His description still thrills us. 'Suppose now the fullness of time to be come, and the prophecies to be accomplished. What a prospect is this! All is peace, "quietness and assurance for ever." Here is no din of arms, no "confused noise," no "garments rolled in blood." "Destructions are come to a perpetual end." Wars are ceased from the earth. Neither are there any intestine jars remaining; no brother rising against brother; no country or city divided against itself and tearing out its own bowels. Civil discord is at an end for evermore, and none is left either to destroy or hurt his neighbour. There is no oppression to "make" even "the wise man mad"; no extortion to "grind the face of the poor"; no robbery or wrong; no rapine or injustice; for all are content "with such things as they possess." "Thus righteousness and peace have kissed each other," they have taken root and filled the land; "righteousness flourishing out of the earth" and "peace looking down from heaven."'

Up to this point of his discourse Wesley seems to have carried his audience with him. Kennicott had been watching him. He says, 'His black hair, quite smooth and parted very exactly, added to a peculiar composure in his countenance, showed him to be an uncommon man.' His prayer had been 'soft, short, and conformable to the rules of the University.' The text had been announced 'very slowly and with an agreeable emphasis.' But after the preacher had finished his description of the righteousness, mercy, and love which were to win their supreme victory in the fully Christianized world, he came to 'the plain, practical application' of the discourse, and his calm expository style was abandoned. He asked, 'Where does this Christianity now exist?' In answering the question it was inevitable that he should inquire if it existed in England or in Oxford. On a former occasion when he had to preach before the University he had intended to speak of the condition of religion in Oxford, but had put aside the sermon he had prepared and chosen another topic. But he was conscious that he might never

have another opportunity of bearing his witness from that pulpit, and he spoke with a vehemence that startled his audience. No man knew the spiritual condition of the country and the University more accurately, and those who are aware of the state of morals and religion in Oxford in the eighteenth century will hesitate to challenge his statements. But 'plain, practical applications' are not the most popular parts of sermons at any time, and they were strongly resented on this occasion.

Kennicott, who deprecated the tone of the 'application,' took special exception to Wesley's assertions that Oxford was not a Christian city, and that England was not a Christian nation. He considered that they were the most offensive parts of the discourse, except the charge of 'perjury' brought against those who, upon becoming members of a college, took an oath to observe the statutes of the University and then failed to observe them in all things. An indulgent critic may think that the 'perjury' charge might have been addressed to the audience, in which there were many imperfectly trained consciences, in more soothing words; but we still wonder why Kennicott resented the assertions concerning Oxford and England. The preacher had defined Christianity in clear terms of Scripture, thereby setting up a standard that was absolute. All merely conventional definitions were rejected. Will any man who knows the condition of Oxford and England in the eighteenth century, and who accepts the New Testament standard of Christianity, dispute the correctness of Wesley's assertion? As to this nation, has there ever been a moment when, in the New Testament sense of the word, England has been Christian? A hundred years after Wesley uttered his great indictment in St. Mary's another preacher spoke out his mind in that church. Those who dispute Wesley's statement should read Newman's searching and impassioned sermons on 'The Religion of the Day,' and 'The Visible Church for the sake of the Elect.'[1] Let them ponder the following sentences from the latter discourse: 'Taking religion to mean, as it well may, the being bound by God's law, the acting under God's will instead of our own, how few are there in a country called Christian who even profess religion in this sense! How few there are who live by any other rule than that of their own ease,

[1] *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, i., 309–324; iv., 150–167.

habit, inclination, as the case may be, on the one hand, and of external circumstances on the other! With how few is the will of God an habitual object of thought, or search, or love, or obedience! All this is so notorious that unbelievers taunt us with it. They see, and scoff at seeing, that Christians, whether the many or the educated or the old, nay, or the sacred ministry, are open to the motives, and unequal to the temptations, which prevail with human nature generally.' Coming down to our own times, who will deny the truth of the words spoken by Dr. Gore when he preached in St. Margaret's Church, Leicester, in connexion with the Church Congress in October, 1919? He then declared that 'except in the vaguest sense' England could not be called 'a Christian country,' and went on to affirm 'It was not merely that in every class those who in any positive sense held the Christian faith were in a minority, but there was a widespread, open revolt against the principles of Christian morality.'[1] Those who are most deeply concerned with the present condition of religion in England will be the last to demur to the melancholy conclusion that, judged by the Scriptural standard, this nation has never been, and is not now, a Christian country. The recognition of the fact in his own time by Wesley was the secret of his self-denying mission to the masses. A national revival of religion in the present day depends, among other things, on our opening our eyes to the actual condition of the churches and the people of England. When the modern Church sees facts as clearly as Wesley saw them there will be a great awakening.

Concluding his description of the sermon, and referring to the remarks he resented, Kennicott says, 'Had these things been omitted, and his censures moderated, I think his discourse as to style and delivery would have been uncommonly pleasing to others as well as myself. . . . He is allowed to be a man of great parts, and that by the excellent Dean of Christ Church, Dr. Conybeare; for the day he preached the Dean generously said of him, "John Wesley will always be thought a man of sound sense, though an enthusiast." However, the Vice-Chancellor sent for the sermon, and I hear the heads of colleges intend to show their resentment.'[2] Their resentment was soon shown, and the Wesleys preached in St. Mary's no more.

[1] *The Times*, October 15, 1919.

[2] *Methodist Magazine*, 1866, p. 44.

John Wesley published his last University sermon in a separate pamphlet. He prefixed to it 'An Address to the Reader,' in which he said: 'It was not my design, when I wrote, ever to print the latter part of the following sermon; but the false and scurrilous accounts of it which have been published, almost in every corner of the nation, constrain me to publish the whole, just as it was preached, that men of reason may judge for themselves.' In his later years he recalled the circumstances attending his last sermon before the University. He emphasizes the fact that it was preached on St. Bartholomew's Day; and, in his *Short History of the People called Methodists*, published in 1781, he says, 'I am now clear of the blood of these men; I have fully delivered my own soul. And I am well pleased that it should be the very day on which, in the last century, near two thousand burning and shining lights were put out at one stroke. Yet what a wide difference is there between their case and mine! They were turned out of house and home, and all that they had; whereas I am only hindered from preaching, without any other loss; and that in a kind of honourable manner, it being determined that, when my next turn to preach came, they would pay another person to preach for me. And so they did twice or thrice, even to the time that I resigned my Fellowship.'[1]

Wesley's reference to St. Bartholomew's Day is arrestive. As time went on his reverence for his Nonconformist ancestors was increased. He learned the secret of the great surrender made by Bartholomew Westley, John Westley, and Dr. Annesley. In searching for the beginning of his understanding of the Nonconformist position, a starting-point may be discovered in the early days of April, 1754. He then read Dr. Calamy's *Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's Life*. The first edition of that book was published in 1702, and the second in 1713. The latter, which is in our possession, is in two volumes. The first contains the *Abridgement* mentioned by Wesley, and the second *An Account of the Ministers Ejected or Silenced after the Restoration in* 1660. In the second volume Dr. Annesley is mentioned, and a short notice of his life and work is given. Among the Dorset ministers we find only the name of 'Mr. Westley, Senior,' as being ejected from Charmouth. In 1727 Calamy published a *Continuation of the Account* in two volumes,

[1] *Works*, xiii., 281, third ed.

and in it there is a brief notice of Bartholomew Westley, and a full notice of his son, John Westley, who is described as 'the father of Mr. Samuel Westley, Rector of Epworth in the diocese of Lincoln, the author of the *Poem on the Life of Christ*, which is dedicated to Queen Mary.' It is probable that, in 1754, John Wesley read the first volume of the second edition, the *Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's Life*, and that he did not become acquainted with the second volume until later. His comment on the volume he read is as follows: 'In spite of all the prejudices of education, I could not but see that the poor Nonconformists had been used without either justice or mercy; and that many of the Protestant bishops of King Charles had neither more religion nor humanity than the Popish bishops of Queen Mary.'[1] Our conviction that Wesley did not read at this time Calamy's *Continuation of the Account* is confirmed by the statement of Henry Moore in his *Life of Wesley*. He says that Wesley 'never saw even the account of his grandfather, John Wesley, by Calamy, till he met it by accident at a friend's house, some years after he began his itinerancy.'[2] Under the date May 25, 1765, John Wesley refers to his discovery. He says, 'Having a remarkable anecdote put into my hands, which some will be pleased to see, I may insert it here as well as elsewhere. It is a conversation between my father's father (taken down in shorthand by himself) and the then Bishop of Bristol. I may be excused if it appears more remarkable to me than it will do to an unconcerned person.' He then inserts the dialogue between John Westley, of Winterbourne Whitchurch, and Dr. Gilbert Ironside, which was published by Dr. Calamy, in 1727.[3] After 1765, as his knowledge of the history of Nonconformity increased his prejudice against Nonconformists diminished, and gradually disappeared.

During the remainder of the year 1744, John Wesley's work was chiefly confined to London. His experiences were chequered. With special joy he greeted the return of John Nelson to the ranks of his itinerant preachers. He had been released from the army on July 28 through the influence of Lord Stair and Lady Huntingdon. A substitute had been hired to take his place, the money being, in all probability, contributed by the Methodists of London at the instigation of Charles Wesley. The day after his release he preached in

[1] *Journal*, iv., 93. [2] ii., 100, *note*. [3] See Wesley's *Journal*, v., 119–124.

the room at Newcastle, and then went home to Birstall. He found the Society there in confusion. Richard Viney, who had a strong leaning towards Moravianism, had visited Birstall, and his influence had been mischievous. John Nelson was deeply distressed at the change in the spirit of the Society. He says, 'I could not eat my bread. I threw myself on the ground and wished for death, saying, "Lord, why hast Thou suffered me to come back to see this evil?" When I preached many stood like stocks or stones, and others smiled at one another, so that my preaching was like a feather thrown against a rock, or as water spilt upon the ground, except to a few strangers who were affected.' But his courage and faith in God returned. He went into the open air and preached to the crowd. Sinners were converted and others were brought back to the simplicity of the gospel. Viney retired, and Nelson's old friends gathered around him once more. He continued in Birstall for some time, and succeeded in restoring the Society.[1] He made an excursion to York, and found that the seed sown in his captivity had sprung up. The little books he had distributed when he was a soldier had been of great use to the people. He especially mentions Charles Wesley's sermon on 'Awake thou that sleepest,' and John Wesley's on 'Salvation by Faith'; also John Wesley's abridgement of the first chapter of Law's *Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection*, which had been issued under the title *The Nature and Design of Christianity*. Wesley's *Extract from the Homilies* had also been serviceable in the cathedral city. He closes his record with the cry, 'Oh, what good might be done, if these books were spread through the land!' At the call of Wesley he left Birstall and went to London. The two men met on September 10. While in London he preached to large congregations, many crowding to hear 'the man who had been in prison.' Several were convinced of the truth they heard.[2] Then he returned to Birstall, and found the people there in a prosperous way, the greatest part of them being quite delivered from 'the antinomian principles' into which they had fallen during his captivity. The Society had increased in grace and number and he gave glory to God for the great things He had done.

[1] See *Early Methodist Preachers*, i., 139–140.

[2] It was during this visit that, with John Wesley's help, he prepared a description of his experiences as a soldier. It was published, and afterwards included in *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*. See i., 1–178.

Soon he was in full itinerant work again, preaching for three months in Newcastle and the neighbourhood.

John Nelson's release from the army encouraged Wesley. It brought a strong helper to his side, but he did not forget the men on the Continent who were fighting for their country, and, at the same time, were working hard to secure the victory of their divine Master. He was in touch with John Haime, William Clements, John Greenwood, Joseph Guilford, and John Evans, and rejoiced in their fearless witness-bearing and success. John Haime sent him reports of the progress that was being made. In the *Journal* there are letters from that gallant Dorset soldier, one of which reached Wesley about the time of Nelson's release. Describing the work that had been done at Assche, Haime said that the Society had increased to upwards of two hundred members, and the hearers frequently numbered more than a thousand. Many officers came to the preaching-services to hear for themselves, nine or ten often being present at a time. The work was not carried on without opposition. A strong attempt had been made to incense the Duke of Cumberland against the Methodists. Instead of rushing to a conclusion the Duke in disguise went to hear the soldier-preachers. He sent for Haime, and conversed with him several times. His explanations being satisfactory, the Duke allowed the services to continue. Two small 'tabernacles' were built in the camp, and in them the Methodist soldiers 'off duty' met at eight o'clock in the morning, at three in the afternoon, and at seven in the evening. Twice each week 'watch-nights' were held. It would have been well if the liberal example of the Field Marshal had been imitated by some of his successors. It is well known that it has been through much tribulation that Methodist soldiers have secured their religious rights in the British army. John Wesley's heart went out towards Haime and his comrades who were fighting the good fight of faith with all their might. In November he received a letter from John Evans, a man whom he greatly admired. In his *Journal*, speaking of him, he says, 'He continued to preach and to live the gospel till the battle of Fontenoy.[1] One of his companions saw him there, laid across a cannon, both his legs having been taken off by a chain-shot, praising God and exhorting all that were

[1] Fought on April 30, 1745, *Old Style*.

round about him ; which he did till his spirit returned to God.' The Christian courage of the Methodist soldiers made a deep impression on Wesley's heart, and he often mentioned the heroism of John Evans at Fontenoy.

During Charles Wesley's visit to Cornwall there had been a slight suspension of active hostilities in the war against the Methodists, but they were soon resumed. One noteworthy incident must be recorded. It has its bright side. It cheers us as does the fleeting promise of the ' false dawn.' One Sunday when Thomas Westell was preaching in Mr. Harris's house at Camborne, a tall man thrust himself into the room and pulled him down. Mr. Harris demanded his warrant ; but he swore that, warrant or no warrant, the preacher should go with him; so he carried him out to the mob, who took him away. He was kept in confinement until the Tuesday morning, and then taken to Penzance. In the afternoon he was brought before three justices, one of whom was Dr. Borlase. His fate was soon fixed. He was committed to the House of Correction at Bodmin as a vagrant, and was confined there for some time. But Dr. Borlase's impetuosity had carried him too far. When the justices met at the next Quarter Sessions at Bodmin, they declared that Mr. Westell's commitment was contrary to all law, and they set him at liberty without delay. This sudden return to equity and common sense revived the hopes of the Methodists of Cornwall.

Dr. Borlase and those who were associated with him in the attempt to exterminate Methodism in Cornwall soon recovered from their humiliating defeat. They continued their assaults, conducting them with more astuteness. They saw that the best way to achieve their purpose was to stop the work of the lay preachers, and the threatened invasion of the country by the ' Young Pretender ' furnished them with their opportunity. The lay preachers were seized by constables, dragged to prison and committed to the custody of military officers and the captains of men-of-war, for the King's service. Scarcely a lay preacher was left at liberty in the whole county. But this seeming catastrophe fell out 'unto the furtherance of the gospel.' In the absence of the lay preachers the Societies continued to meet, and their meeting suggested a remedy. Speaking of this critical time, Thomas Jackson, in his *Life of Charles Wesley*, says, ' Under these circumstances a new

class of labourers had been raised up in almost every place, bearing the name of 'exhorters.' They did not preach in the usual sense of that term, but held meetings for prayer, and addressed the people on the subject of religion, giving them requisite encouragement and admonition, and calling "them that were without" to repentance. In this Charles Wesley saw the hand of God raising up instruments to carry on His own work, the 'exhorters' being generally men of superior sense and of unquestionable piety. By the labours of these men the Societies were kept together. . . . Thus the work was carried on, in despite of opposition, till persecutors themselves, if not convinced, saw their efforts to be hopeless, and agreed to "refrain from these men, and let them alone." '[1] It is difficult to discover the exact time when the first 'exhorter' began his work, but in 1746 the 'exhorters' seem to have attained a recognized position in the Methodist Societies in Cornwall.

[1] *Life of Charles Wesley*, i., 444.

XVI

DREAD OF INVASION

On January 5, 1745, John and Charles Wesley called at James Hutton's house hoping to see their old acquaintance, John Gambold. He had joined the Moravians, and ultimately became one of their bishops. He was not in when the Wesleys called, but Mr. Stonehouse was there. He also had joined the Moravians, and had sold the living of Islington. Conversing with him, they found that he had accepted the doctrine of 'stillness,' and was 'extremely gay, easy, and unconcerned.' They left the house much disappointed with him. They knew he was an unstable man, but the change in him was so striking that it astonished them. In other days he had befriended them when the churches of London were closed against them, and the remembrance of his kindness turned their astonishment to grief.[1]

The year opened with cloudy weather. Reading the entries in John Wesley's *Journal* we are conscious of strain and depression. We are so accustomed to his fine courage, his strength of will, his unruffled calm, his indomitable cheerfulness, that the change of tone awakens our sympathy. In January he writes, 'I had often wondered at myself, and sometimes mentioned it to others, that ten thousand cares, of various kinds, were no more weight or burden to my mind than ten thousand hairs were to my head. Perhaps I began to ascribe something of this to my own strength. And thence it might be that, on Sunday the 13th, that strength was withheld, and I felt what it was to be troubled about many things. One, and another, and another, hurrying me continually, it seized upon my spirit more and more till I found it absolutely necessary to fly for my life, and that without delay; so the next day, Monday the 14th, I took horse and rode away to Bristol.'

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 214 *et seq.*

We can understand that a rigorously methodical man like Wesley, who was accustomed to map out his daily work and to put his whole strength into it, objected to be hindered and confused by being hurried continually ; but we are convinced that there were other reasons for his experience of the pressure of ' the load of care.' The estrangement of old friends like Gambold and Stonehouse troubled him. Moreover, it must be remembered that he had to bear his brother's burdens at this time. It is true that Thomas Williams had withdrawn his charges, but their echoes had not been silenced. It was in this month that the Bishop of London was preparing to investigate the accusations that had been made against Charles Wesley's moral character. The brothers had stood together through many storms, and now that the sky was darkening they shared the gloom.

In trying to account for John Wesley's depression it is necessary to note that the close of the preceding year had brought him an unpleasant experience. He was compelled to wait on his solicitor because a suit had been commenced against him in Chancery. Then, for the first time, he saw ' that foul monster, a Chancery Bill ! ' He describes it as ' a scroll of forty-two pages, in large folio, to tell a story which needed not to have taken up forty lines.' We presume that the ' Bill ' had relation to Dodsley's action against him for including without permission a considerable portion of Young's *Night Thoughts*, together with some pieces by Mrs. Rowe, in a volume of *Moral and Sacred Poems*, which he had dedicated to Lady Huntingdon. Wesley's acquaintance with the law of copyright needed to be enlarged. In 1709, in the reign of Queen Anne, the first Copyright Act was passed. The statute declared the author to have an exclusive right over his book for fourteen years, and if at the end of that term he were living, the right was to return to him again for the same term of years. Through inadvertence Wesley had broken the law. On February 18, 1745, the action was settled by a payment of £50, and a promise not to print Dr. Young's and Mrs. Rowe's poems again in any form whatever. When the £50 and solicitors' costs had been paid, Wesley's antipathy to lawyers and legal processes was confirmed. With this action hanging over his head his ' burden of care ' was undoubtedly made heavier. It is a comfort to find that his flight to Bristol

brought relief. He tells us that when he came into the 'Room' in the Horsefair his 'soul was lightened of her load.'

Refreshed in spirit, Wesley returned to London. On the day when the Dodsley action was settled he began his journey to Newcastle. Between wind, and hail, and rain, and ice, and snow and driving sleet, and piercing cold, such a journey he had never had before. Richard Moss, who had come to the Foundery as a servant the previous year, accompanied him. He became a lay preacher, and the editor of Wesley's *Journal* tells us in a note that he travelled widely, and endured much persecution. He was subsequently ordained by the Bishop of London as a missionary to the Bahamas.[1] When the travellers reached Doncaster they met William Holme, who piloted them through mire, snow, and water to Sykehouse. He was a farmer in that village, and the leader of the class that had been formed in his house shortly after the rise of the United Society in London. In addition, he was one of the earliest local preachers employed by Wesley; that is, he was a preacher who 'served in one place.'[2]

On Saturday, February 23, Newcastle was reached after exciting adventures. Wesley tells us that, on that day, the roads were abundantly worse than on the day before, not only because the snow was deeper, which made the causeways in many places impassable, but because the hard frost, succeeding the thaw, had made all the ground like glass. We can imagine the plight of men who found themselves in such a country on a hard winter day, especially when we consider the condition of the roads in that part of the north of England. The two travellers were often obliged to walk, it being impossible to ride; their horses several times fell down even while they were leading them. It was past eight o'clock at night before they reached Gateshead Fell, which appeared a great pathless waste of white. The snow filling up and covering all the trackways, they were at a loss how to proceed, when 'an honest man of Newcastle' overtook them, and guided them safe into town.

On Monday, March 11, John Wesley wrote 'a letter to a friend' which is so important that it must be quoted in its entirety. It is as follows:

[1] *Journal*, iii., 164, *note*. [2] *Journal*, iii., 164.

I have been drawing up this morning a short state of the case between the clergy and us; I leave you to make any use of it as you believe will be to the glory of God.

1. About seven years since we began preaching inward, present salvation, as attainable by faith alone.

2. For preaching this doctrine we were forbidden to preach in the churches.

3. We then preached in private houses, as occasion offered; and, when the houses could not contain the people, in the open air.

4. For this, many of the clergy preached or printed against us, as both heretics and schismatics.

5. Persons who were convinced of sin begged us to advise them more particularly how to flee from the wrath to come. We replied, if they would all come at one time (for they were numerous) we would endeavour it.

6. For this we were represented, both from the pulpit and the press (we have heard it with our ears, and seen it with our eyes), as introducing Popery, raising sedition, practising both against Church and State; and all manner of evil was publicly said both of us and those who were accustomed to meet with us.

7. Finding some truth herein, viz. that some of those who so met together walked disorderly, we immediately desired them not to come to us any more.

8. And the more steady were desired to overlook the rest, that we might know if they walked according to the gospel.

9. But now several of the bishops began to speak against us, either in conversation or in public.

10. On this encouragement, several of the clergy stirred up the people to treat us as outlaws or mad dogs.

11. The people did so, both in Staffordshire, Cornwall, and many other places.

12. And they do so still, wherever they are not restrained by their fear of the secular magistrate.

Thus the case stands at present. Now, what can we do, or what can you our brethren do, towards healing this breach? which is highly desirable, that we may withstand, with joint force, the still increasing flood of Popery, Deism, and immorality.

Desire of us anything we can do with a safe conscience, and we will do it immediately. Will you meet us here? Will you do what we desire of you, so far as you can with safe conscience?

Let us come to particulars. Do you desire us (1) To preach another, or to desist from preaching this, doctrine?

We think you do not desire it, as knowing we cannot do this with a safe conscience. Do you desire us (2) To desist from preaching in private houses, or in the open air? As things are now circumstanced, this would be the same as desiring us not to preach at all.

Do you desire us (3) To desist from advising those who now meet together for that purpose? Or, in other words, to dissolve our Societies?

We cannot do this with a safe conscience, for we apprehend many

souls would be lost thereby, and that God would require their blood at our hands.

Do you desire us (4) To advise them only one by one?

This is impossible because of their number.

Do you desire us (5) To suffer those who walk disorderly still to mix with the rest?

Neither can we do this with a safe conscience, because 'evil communications corrupt good manners.'

Do you desire us (6) To discharge those leaders of bands or classes (as we term them) who overlook the rest?

This is, in effect, to suffer the disorderly walkers still to mix with the rest, which we dare not do.

Do you desire us, lastly, to behave with reverence toward those who are overseers of the Church of God? And with tenderness both to the character and persons of our brethren, the inferior clergy?

By the grace of God we can and will do this. Yea, our conscience beareth us witness that we have already laboured so to do, and that at all times and in all places.

If you ask what we desire of you to do, we answer:

1. We do not desire any one of you to let us preach in your church, either if you believe us to preach false doctrine, or if you have, upon any other ground, the least scruple of conscience concerning it. But we desire any who believes us to preach true doctrine, and has no scruple at all in this matter, may not be either publicly or privately discouraged from inviting us to preach in his church.

2. We do not desire that any one who thinks that we are heretics or schismatics, and that it is his duty to preach or print against us, as such, should refrain therefrom, so long as he thinks it is his duty (although in this case the breach can never be healed).

But we desire that none will pass such a sentence till he has calmly considered both sides of the question; that he would not condemn us unheard; but first read what we have written, and pray earnestly that God may direct him in the right way.

3. We do not desire any favour if either Popery, sedition, or immorality be proved against us.

But we desire you will not credit, without proof, any of those senseless tales that pass current with the vulgar; that if you do not credit them yourselves, you will not relate them to others (which we have known done); yea, that you will confute them, so far as you have opportunity, and discountenance those who still retail them abroad.

4. We do not desire any preferment, favour, or recommendation from those that are in authority, either in Church or State; but we desire:

(1) That if anything material be laid to our charge, we may be permitted to answer for ourselves; (2) That you would hinder your dependants from stirring up the rabble against us; who are certainly not the proper judges of these matters; and (3) That you would effectually suppress and thoroughly discountenance all riots and

popular insurrections, which evidently strike at the foundation of all government, whether of Church or State.

Now these things you certainly can do, and that with a safe conscience. Therefore, till these things are done the continuance of the breach is chargeable on you, and you only.[1]

John Wesley's eirenicon had no effect. At that time there was no leader in the Church of England sufficiently powerful to arbitrate between the Church and the Methodists. That fact is now admitted. In the absence of firm and far-seeing leadership force was the remedy to be applied, and its futility in such a case has passed into a proverb. In the course of a sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on November 19, 1916, the Bishop of London said, ' If the Church had always led the important work of the country as she leads it now, the millions of Wesleyans would be in the Church of England to-day.' We cannot accept Dr. Ingram's statement in its entirety, but his assertion concerning the lack of right leadership in the Church of the eighteenth century cannot be successfully contested.[2]

On April 15 Wesley left Newcastle and commenced his journey to London, where he arrived on May 11. He visited many places during his long ride, and records several interesting incidents in his *Journal*. He does not mention a fact which was to have a profound influence on his future work. We do not know when the news of the battle of Fontenoy spread through England, but when the news was told the nation was thrown into a state of excitement that soon rose to panic. In order that we may understand the circumstances amidst which Wesley carried on his mission during the remainder of 1745 it will be useful to recall certain facts which stand out boldly in our national history.

On April 30, 1745,[3] the battle of Fontenoy was fought between the French, under Marshal Saxe, and the English, Hanoverians, Dutch, and Austrians, commanded by the Duke of Cumberland. At first it seemed that the Allies would be victorious, but the fortune of war changed and went against them. They were obliged to retire after suffering the loss of twelve thousand men. The French loss equalled that of the Allies, but the victory

[1] *Journal*, iii., 166–169. [2] *Daily News*, Nov. 20, 1916.
[3] *Old Style.*

remained with them, and the influence of the defeat soon reached England. We have noticed the failure of the 'Young Pretender' in his attempt to invade England in the interest of his father. Discouraged for a time, his hopes of success revived. When the French won the battle of Fontenoy he felt that the hour had come to renew his attempt. It is true that the French King gave him slight encouragement, and little substantial aid; but for a considerable time his supporters in the highlands of Scotland had been busy amongst the clans, and their messages to him excited his hopes of success. Flushed with enthusiasm, he embarked; and on July 25 he reached Scotland and effected a landing on the west coast. On September 4 he was in Perth, where he publicly proclaimed his father King. The news of the arrival of Charles Edward spread through England. It caused intense dismay. In many places, especially in London, the clergy of the English Church rendered valuable service at this crisis. They felt that the throne and the Protestant religion were in danger, and they denounced the action of the 'Young Pretender.' The tocsin of the pulpit roused the loyalty and the fighting spirit of the country. On September 16 Charles Edward set up his standard in Edinburgh and took possession of the Palace of Holyrood. The garrison of the Castle held out for King George during these turbulent days, but the Jacobites swarmed in the city. In *Waverley* Sir Walter Scott has depicted the events of those critical weeks, not only with the skill of an incomparable artist, but with the insight of a politician. He has sketched the scenes enacted in Edinburgh so vividly that his readers forget the present and live in the eighteenth century. Towards the end of September we watch the gathering of the Highlanders under the shadows of the great hills. We follow their march until, on September 21, we see them drawn up in battle array near Preston Pans. The first great blow in the war is to be struck. We know now how that battle ended; but when it began a thoughtful observer might have prophesied that the rebellion would be crushed at once. Sir John Cope was in command of an English army that inspired confidence, but his troops, when furiously attacked by the wild Highlanders, were seized with panic, and most of them fled the field. Amid the rush of the fugitives we catch glimpses of a steadfast man who disdains to join in the flight. He is the colonel of a cavalry

regiment. With the exception of about fifteen dragoons, his men have fled. Seeing a regiment of foot still holding its ground, though it had lost all its officers, he rides up to it and shouts, ' Fire on, my lads, and fear nothing ! ' The words are just out of his mouth when a Highlander, armed with a scythe fastened to a long pole, cuts him down. He is dragged from his horse ; and, as he lies on the ground, another clansman, either with a broadsword or a Lochaber axe, gives him the mortal blow. The memory of this ' good Christian and gallant man,' as Sir Walter Scott calls him, is still cherished. We cannot forget Colonel James Gardiner, the friend of Dr. Doddridge.[1]

The news of the defeat of the English army at Preston Pans spread consternation through the country. But worse was to follow ; and the danger-point of panic was reached. On November 6 the ' Young Pretender ' crossed the border. In less than a fortnight he was in possession of Carlisle. By the end of the month he was in Manchester. It is well known that at the time Manchester contained a strong Jacobite party. The Prince found himself in the midst of friends. Dr. Stoughton, following Dr. Halley's account of those exciting days, says :

In Lancashire sides were taken according to political predilections. The Nonjurors boldly came out in support of Prince Charles. Three sons of the Nonjuring clergyman, Dr. Deacon, on their father's advice, and with their father's blessing, obtained commissions in the army of the Pretender. Members of his congregation, together with Roman Catholics and some orthodox Churchmen, became officers of the Manchester Regiment. One of the first enrolled was no other than the ' Jemmy Dawson,' immortalized in Shenstone's ballad. An Oxford clergyman, teacher in the Grammar Schools, dressed in canonicals, accompanied a drummer as he went through the town beating up recruits. James III was proclaimed in Manchester, and one of the chaplains of the Collegiate Church, in the presence of crowds lining Salford Street, offered solemn prayer for a divine benediction on the daring enterprise. Sunday, December 1, witnessed a grand gathering in the Collegiate Church. The Manchester Regiment marched there under a banner inscribed with the motto, ' Church and Country.' The men wore blue, the officers Scotch tartan, all mounting the white cockade. Ladies in plaid ribbons, shawls, and mantles poured into the edifice. Charles occupied the Warden's seat, and the Oxford clergyman

[1] In the ' Author's Notes ' at the end of *Waverley* Sir Walter Scott gives an extract from Dr. Doddridge's *Life of Colonel Gardiner* which describes his death on the battle-field. *Border ed.*, ii., 372.

preached from the words, 'The Lord is King, let the earth be glad thereof.'[1]

Manchester undoubtedly contained a large number of Jacobites, but Liverpool was loyal to the reigning house. The pastor of the Baptist Church in Byron Street raised a regiment in defence of King George. In other places the Dissenters distinguished themselves by their support of the throne. Dr. Doddridge was especially active, and promoted the raising of troops in his congregation and neighbourhood. It may be said that, throughout the country, the Dissenters were untouched by the almost irresistible glamour that captivated those who came into the presence of 'Bonnie Prince Charlie.'

Avoiding Liverpool, the 'Young Pretender,' with his army, marched towards Derby. He arrived there on December 4. The news of his advance produced what Lecky calls a disgraceful panic in London. There was a violent run on the Bank of England which might have ended in disaster had not the astute officials determined that all withdrawals should be paid in sixpences.[2] Three considerable armies were formed to oppose the invaders, and Hessian troops were brought over to support the Government. But the Prince had reached the limits of his advance, and the halt at Derby was fatal to the success of his enterprise. Angry discussions on the plan of campaign revived ancient animosities; old antipathies reasserted themselves; suspended quarrels were resumed; and pride and jealousy destroyed the chances of united action. At last it was resolved to retreat, and the Highland host turned its face to the north. It is not necessary to follow its march to Scotland through the dismal December weather. But we must pause at one point to catch sight of an officer whose figure is familiar to those who have followed the fortunes of the Wesleys in Georgia. A short distance south of Penrith lies Clifton Moor, where the rearguard of Charles Edward's army was stationed. The winter sun had set when suddenly it was seen that a large body of cavalry was approaching. The Highlanders lined the enclosures facing the open ground, and

[1] *History of Religion in England*, vi., 16. Dr. Stoughton gives March 30 as the date of the holding of the service in the Collegiate Church, now the Manchester Cathedral. For Dr. Thomas Deacon see *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, pp. 96 *et seq.*

[2] See Lecky's *History*, ii., 29, *note*.

the road by which the cavalry was riding towards the village of Clifton. Though the moon was at the full her light was much obscured by thick clouds, and it was not long before the sound of men on the march was heard. Favoured by the night, a large body of English dismounted dragoons advanced out of the darkness to attack the enclosures; another, equally strong, attempted to penetrate by the high road. Both were received with such a heavy fire that their ranks were broken and the attack failed.[1] This night attack was under the command of General Oglethorpe. His repulse became the subject of an investigation at a court of inquiry. He was acquitted; but Lecky says that his conduct during the campaign 'threw a certain shadow over his military reputation,' a remark which might be made in the case of not a few of the English commanders.[2] After this skirmish the Prince renewed his retreat, crossed the border, and by the close of the year retired on Glasgow.

The work of Wesley during this eventful year was continued in the midst of the national turmoil. Some of his supporters in London, yielding to the terror, began to question the wisdom of carrying on aggressive work. One of them went farther. On May 23 Wesley had 'one more conversation' with a man who had often strengthened his hands. The advice he received was 'to return to the Church, to renounce all his lay assistants, to dissolve his Societies, to leave off field preaching, and to accept honourable preferment.' He ignored these counsels of despair. Mounting his horse he left London and rode towards Cornwall.

Reaching Bristol on June 11, he found that the Antinomians had been busy there; but, after making diligent inquiry, he could not discover seven persons out of the seven hundred members of the Society who had been 'turned out of the old Bible way.' Refreshed in spirit, he left the city early on Friday, June 14, and reached St. Gennys on Sunday morning. He preached there; and, spending a few days in the neighbourhood, he preached in several other churches. The extreme north-west of Cornwall was in peace. Resuming his journey, in the company of Mr. Thomson and Mr. Shepherd, he soon came to places where persecution raged.

[1] See *Waverley*, ii., 244.

[2] Oglethorpe was appointed Major-General in 1745 and Lieutenant-General in 1747. In 1760 he became a General of His Majesty's Forces.

When the travellers reached Redruth they learned that the assailants of the Methodists had struck a shrewd blow at the Societies in that neighbourhood. The minister of Redruth, who was also a magistrate, was determined ' to root out the sect.' He had tried his 'prentice hand, but had met with small success. Dr. Borlase had come to his assistance, and a bolder policy was adopted. A warrant signed by him, his father, and Mr. Usticke, of St. Buryan, was issued. It was addressed to the constables and overseers of certain parishes, and it required them to apprehend all such able-bodied men as had no lawful calling or sufficient maintenance, and to bring them before those who had signed the warrant, on Friday, June 21, to be examined ' whether they were proper persons to serve His Majesty in the land-service.' The steward of Sir John St. Aubyn had written on the warrant the names of seven or eight men, most of whom were well known to have lawful callings and sufficient maintenance ; but, says Wesley, ' that was all one ; they were called Methodists ; therefore soldiers they must be.' He would be interested when he noticed, on the warrant, the following sentence added to the list : ' A person, his name unknown, who disturbs the peace of the parish.' At that time Thomas Maxfield, who was remarkable for his power as a preacher and for his influence in the Methodist Societies, had been working with much success in Redruth. Those who executed the warrant had no difficulty in understanding the somewhat vague allusion to the person whose name was unknown. The constables seized Maxfield and took him to Crowan. Frightened by the rumour that five hundred Methodists were coming to rescue the preacher, they raced their prisoner to a house which stood about two miles from Crowan. There Wesley and his companions saw Maxfield and found him ' nothing terrified by his adversaries.'

On Friday, June 21, Wesley and Mr. Thomson rode to Marazion. As the magistrates and commissioners were not to meet until the afternoon they employed the interval in visiting St. Michael's Mount. When the magistrates assembled they went into the room. After a few minutes Dr. Borlase stood up and asked them if they had any business. Wesley replied that he desired to be heard concerning one who was lately apprehended at Crowan. Dr. Borlase then said,

'Gentlemen, the business of Crowan does not come on yet. You shall be sent for when it does.' They retired, and waited in another room till after nine o'clock. The magistrates put off Maxfield's case to the last, and hurried on the proceedings without sending for Wesley and Thomson. News came to them that Maxfield had been sentenced 'to go for a soldier.' They went straight to the commission-chamber; 'but the honourable gentlemen were gone.' They were told that the commissioners had ordered that Maxfield should be immediately put on board a boat and taken to Penzance. Before they came to this decision they offered him to the captain of a man-of-war that had just come into the harbour; but he answered, 'I have no authority to take such men as these, unless you would have me give him so much a week to preach and pray to my people.' So Maxfield was taken to Penzance and put into the dungeon. Wesley was afterwards told that the Mayor was inclined to release him, but Dr. Borlase had gone to Penzance, and had read the Articles of War in the court, and had delivered Maxfield to one who was to act as an officer.[1]

On June 24 Wesley was at St. Ives, and found that the fierceness of the persecution had subsided in the town. That fact was plainly demonstrated when he again visited the place on Sunday, June 30. He then preached in the street, near John Nance's door, to a multitude of people, 'high and low, rich and poor.' It is true that the hostile Mayor sent a man to read the Riot Act, but there was no other disturbance. Concluding his service quickly, Wesley moved towards the room followed by an orderly crowd. Forty or fifty persons begged that they might be allowed to be present at the meeting of the Society. He consented, and says, 'We rejoiced together for an hour in such a manner as I had never known before in Cornwall.' In a sky which is otherwise all dark it is cheering to watch a little sunshine streaming for a moment from an opening cloud.

Through the influence of the curate-in-charge at St. Just the Methodists had escaped the persecutions that had assailed the Societies in the neighbourhood, but Dr. Borlase now interfered. He issued a warrant for the apprehension of

[1] In the case of Maxfield Dr. Borlase's success was short-lived. When Charles Wesley reached London on July 6 he tells us that he was welcomed with the joyful news of T. Maxfield's deliverance (*Journal*, i., 400).

Edward Greenfield, a member of the Society, who had a wife and seven children. Three years before he had been notorious for all manner of wickedness, but old things had passed away, and he was remarkable for his consistent Christian conduct. The warrant was executed at the close of a sermon preached by Wesley at St. Just. Wesley asked a gentleman what objection there was to Edward Greenfield. The reply was, 'Why, the man is well enough in other things; but his impudence the gentlemen cannot bear. Why, sir, he says he knows his sins are forgiven!' 'And for this cause,' Wesley adds, 'he is adjudged to banishment or death.'

The arrest of Thomas Maxfield did not exhaust the programme of Dr. Borlase and his confederates. The presence of John Wesley provoked them, and they determined that he should share Maxfield's fate. There were difficulties in the way. In 1703, in Queen Anne's reign, an Act for raising recruits had been passed which empowered Justices of the Peace to impress idle persons for soldiers and marines.[1] The definition of an 'idle person' varied in accordance with the prejudices and requirements of magistrates. It had been made to cover Maxfield and other lay preachers who were exceptionally hard-working men. Was it an accurate description of John Wesley? There was another question to be considered. Had the magistrates a right, under the Act of Queen Anne, to impress clergymen? It must be remembered that the Act which specifically exempts them from service in the militia was not then in existence. It was in December, 1757, that Colonel George Townshend brought in his bill 'for the better ordering of the militia forces in the several counties of England.' After much discussion it passed into an Act; and, by one of its provisions, members of either University, clergymen, and 'teachers of separate meetings,' were exempted from service.[2] Whatever may have been the difficulties in his way Dr. Borlase determined that John Wesley should be 'impressed.' We follow his movements with interest.

On Tuesday, July 2, Wesley preached at St. Just. As he was concluding his sermon Mr. Usticke, who was a magistrate, came through the crowd and said to him, 'Sir, I have a warrant from Dr. Borlase, and you must go with me.' Turning to Mr. Shepherd, he said to him, 'You are mentioned in the warrant

[1] Smollett's *History of England*, ix., 346. [2] Smollett's *History*, xii., 430.

too. Be pleased, sir, to come with me.' They went to the inn, and Wesley expressed his willingness to go to Dr. Borlase's house at once. Mr. Usticke put off the visit until the morning. The next day Wesley had some difficulty in discovering Mr. Usticke. By diligent search he found him, and arranged a meeting with him at Mr. Chenhalls' house.[1] After waiting for some time Mr. Usticke arrived. He seemed very unwilling to proceed with his task, but he mounted his horse, and, says Wesley, ' We were an hour and a quarter riding three or four measured miles.' Arriving at the house, a servant informed them that Dr. Borlase was gone to church. Mr. Usticke, immensely relieved, cried, 'Well, sir, I have executed my commission. I have done, sir; I have no more to say.' Then he left them to find their way to St. Ives.

Dr. Borlase's attempt to seize Wesley ended in a fiasco. On the same day Wesley and Mr. Shepherd rode from St. Ives to Gwennap. We will give the story of Wesley's adventure there in his own words :

Finding the house would not contain one-fourth of the people, I stood before the door. I was reading my text when a man came, raging as if just broke out of the tombs; and, riding into the thickest of the people, seized three or four, one after another, none lifting up a hand against him. A second (gentleman, so called) soon came after, if possible more furious than he, and ordered his men to seize on some others, Mr. Shepherd in particular. Most of the people, however, stood still as they were before, and began singing a hymn. Upon this Mr. B.[2] lost all patience, and cried out with all his might, ' Seize him, seize him! I say seize the preacher for His Majesty's service.' But, no one stirring, he rode up and struck several of his attendants, cursing them bitterly for not doing as they were bid. Perceiving still that they would not move, he leaped off his horse, swore he would do it himself, and caught hold of my cassock, crying, ' I take you to serve His Majesty.' A servant taking his horse, he took me by the arm and we walked arm-in-arm for about three-quarters of a mile. He entertained me all the time with the ' wickedness of the fellows belonging to the Society.' When he was taking breath I said, ' Sir, be they what they will, I apprehend it will not justify you in seizing me in this manner, and violently carrying me away, as you said, to serve His Majesty.' He replied, ' *I seize you? And violently carry you away?* No, sir, no. Nothing like it. I asked you to go with me to my house, and you said you was willing; and if so, you are welcome; and if not, you are welcome to go where you please.' I answered, ' Sir, I know

[1] All who know St. Just will be familiar with the name of Chenhalls.

[2] In 1755 this gentleman was Sheriff of Cornwall.

not if it would be safe for me to go back through this rabble.' 'Sir,' said he, 'I will go with you myself.' He then called for his horse, and another for me, and rode back with me to the place from whence he took me.

The confederates' plan for 'impressing' Wesley broke down once more. The description of the attempt made at Gwennap, in the district from which Thomas Maxfield had just been taken, yields another illustration of the remarkable influence which he exercised over his adversaries when he came into personal contact with them, and talked to them quietly face to face.

On July 4 Wesley rode to Falmouth, and in the afternoon visited a gentlewoman who had long been indisposed. His sick visit was soon interrupted, for the house was beset on all sides by an innumerable multitude of people. In the mob were the crews of privateers lately come into the harbour. Some of the sailors set their shoulders to the inner door and burst it open. Wesley stepped into the midst of them, and went out into the street and spoke to the rioters. He once more prevailed. One or more of the captains turned round and said not a man should touch him. It is with great satisfaction we record the fact that at this point Mr. Thomas, a clergyman, exerted himself for his protection. He was soon seconded by two or three gentlemen of the town and one of the aldermen. His protectors conducted him to Mrs. Maddern's house, and afterwards enabled him to escape to Penryn by water. At one time during the riot Wesley considered that his life was not worth an hour's purchase. Through the courage of his defenders he was delivered, and he never forgot their acts of kindness.

Wesley's horse had been sent to Penryn. He had to preach at Tolcarn, in Wendron parish, in the evening, and as he approached that place he met a number of people, 'running as it were for their lives.' They begged him to go no farther. They told him that the churchwardens and constables, and all the heads of the parish, were waiting for him at the top of the hill, and were resolved to have him. They also said that a special warrant had been issued by the justices who had met at Helston, and that they were staying there until he was brought to them. Wesley rode up to a group of

four or five horsemen who were evidently awaiting him. His conversation with them prevented their interference with his liberty. At its close one of the horsemen riding with him to a gate said to him, 'Sir, I will tell you the ground of this. All the gentlemen of these parts say that you have been a long time in France and Spain, and are now sent hither by the Pretender, and that these Societies are to join him.' Wesley's quiet comment on the statement is, 'Nay, surely, "all the gentlemen in these parts" will not lie against their own conscience!' Then he rode to the house of a friend some miles off, 'and found that the sleep of a labouring man is sweet.'

The rest of Wesley's visit to Cornwall was disturbed by constant 'alarums of war,' but he steadily went on with his work. One incident must be recorded. At St. Ives, which he describes as 'the most still and honourable post which we have in Cornwall,' he held a noteworthy meeting. On Saturday, July 13, he met the stewards of all the Societies in the circuit. During his journey from Newcastle to London he became more closely acquainted with the Societies which John Bennet had formed in Cheshire, Derbyshire, and Lancashire. He preached in several of them, and it is undoubted that he was impressed with a feature of their organization which he saw to be of great value. Bennet had instituted a system of quarterly meetings in which the officials of the 'Round' gave an account of the condition of the several Societies, and transacted necessary business. In connexion with these meetings religious services were held. Wesley caught the idea at once, and we must carefully watch its development. It is another illustration of the fact that he constantly aimed at the close association of preachers and laymen in the great work he was conducting in this country.

The time was swiftly approaching when John Wesley must leave Cornwall. He had invited certain clergymen and lay preachers to meet him in Bristol, where the second Conference was to be held on August 1. Notwithstanding the fierce persecution that was raging in Cornwall, he had reason to rejoice in the progress of the work. When he met the Rev. John Bennett at Trewint he was told that Francis Walker, one of his lay preachers, had been driven out of that neighbourhood. He had been an instrument of great good wherever

he had worked. Recording this fact in his *Journal* Wesley says, 'I never remember so great an awakening in Cornwall, wrought in so short a time, among young and old, rich and poor, from Trewint quite to the seaside.'[1] After preaching in the churches of Trewint, Laneast, Tresmere, Week St. Mary, and Tamerton, he commenced his journey to Minehead, where he embarked for Wales. He preached in several places, and on July 22, in the company of the Rev. John Hodges, the rector of Wenvoe, he set out for Garth, and stayed with Mr. Marmaduke Gwynne. Mr. Hodges and Mr. Gwynne went with him to Bristol, where they arrived on July 25. We seem to hear Wesley's sigh of relief as he writes in his *Journal*, 'I found both my soul and body much refreshed in this peaceful place.' It was not long that the outward calm of Bristol continued. The date July 25 wears an ominous look. On that day we see a small frigate sailing among the western isles of Scotland. She has just escaped from a sea-fight, in which her convoy, the *Elizabeth*, a French ship of war, has been engaged with the English *Lion*. Both the battleships have been disabled, but the frigate makes her way to the mainland, and disembarks her passengers on the wild coast. The 'Young Pretender' has landed in Scotland.[2]

[1] *Journal*, iii., 194.

[2] Smollett's *History of England*, xi., 213.

XVII

THE SECOND CONFERENCE

THE news of the sea-fight between the *Lion* and the *Elizabeth* would reach the port of Bristol. It is probable that the *Elizabeth* would be sighted as she crept towards Brest. As for the *Lion*, she was so shattered that she floated like a wreck on the water. Passing ships would hail her, and go to her assistance, and learn of the escape of the 'Young Pretender' in the frigate. The excitement in Bristol would be intense. Wesley was an enthusiastic supporter of the Government. The reports concerning his interviews with Charles Edward occupy a prominent place in the list of popular delusions. They were sheer calumnies, and calumnies have been well described by a witty Frenchman as 'the fruits of malevolence gathered by credulity.' Deeply interested in the course of national events, Wesley went on with his arrangements for the Conference.

On Thursday, August 1, 1745, the second Conference assembled in the New Room, Bristol. It was the 'Room' erected by Wesley in 1739, not the rebuilt and enlarged 'Room' in which he first preached on September 13, 1748. It is necessary to emphasize this fact in order to dispose of a legend that has exhibited extraordinary vitality. The attendance at the Conference was numerically about the same as in the previous year. It would have been larger had it not been for the unfavourable circumstances in which it was held. The disturbed condition of the country, together with the distance between Bristol and the chief centres of Methodist work, made it difficult for the clergy and lay preachers to attend. Wesley tells us that 'as many of the brethren as could be present' were there. Only three clergymen were members of this Conference—John and Charles Wesley and John Hodges. There was an increase in the number of lay preachers. Thomas Richards, Samuel Larwood, Thomas Meyrick, and James Wheatley, four of Wesley's 'assistants,' and Richard Moss, John Slocomb, and Herbert Jenkins, three of his 'helpers,'

were present.[1] In addition, Mr. Marmaduke Gwynne was a member of the Conference. We miss John Bennet's name, having relied on him for particulars of the business transacted. But we are not left without his guidance. It is probable that John Wesley sent him a draft of the proceedings, for we have a full report of the Conference in the Bennet 'Minutes.' John and Charles Wesley were expert shorthand writers, and the difficulty caused by Bennet's absence was overcome.

The spirit that ruled the first Conference was manifested in the conduct of the proceedings at Bristol. Those who were present agreed to do their work with minds always open to any further light which God might give them. It was decided as a general method, to read and weigh at every Conference each article of the preceding Conferences, and to speak freely and hear calmly, touching each conclusion that they might either retract, amend, or enlarge it. It was also agreed that every question proposed should be examined from the foundation, and if any defect were found in former decisions it should then be amended. The right of freedom of speech was carefully guarded. No one was to be checked, either by word or look, 'even though he should say what was quite wrong.' In order that every point might be fully and thoroughly settled, the caution was given to 'beware of making haste or showing any impatience, whether of delay or of contradiction.'

The 'open mind' was manifested by the Conference in its examination and revision of its previous decisions concerning the doctrines of Justification by Faith and Sanctification. The positions taken up by the London Conference on the former were generally maintained, but it is interesting to note some variations that were introduced by these seekers after truth. On Friday, when the 'conversations' on Justification were resumed, it was asked, 'Does a man believe any longer than he sees God?' The answer was, 'We conceive not. But we allow there may be infinite degrees in seeing God; even as many as there are between him who sees the sun when it shines on his eyelids closed and him who stands with his eyes wide open in the full blaze of his beams.' Another question followed, 'Does a man believe any longer than he loves God?' To this a positive answer was given: 'In no wise; for neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails, without faith working

[1] For Herbert Jenkins, see *W.H.S. Proceedings*, vi., 141.

by love.' Having reached this conclusion, a case was discussed which seems to have presented itself often to Wesley's mind when he was considering the difficult question of 'good works before justification.' He had found it hard to reconcile it with the Thirteenth Article of the Church of England, and was willing to avail himself of light which might spring from the opinions of his fellow counsellors. The interest of the question discussed remains to the present day, and we eagerly listen to the conversation of these broad-minded men.

Q. 7. Have we duly considered the case of Cornelius? Was not he in the favour of God when his prayers and his alms came up for a memorial before God; i.e. before he believed in Him?

A. It does seem that he was. But we speak not of those who have not heard the gospel.

Q. 8. But were those works of his splendid sins?

A. No; nor were they done without the grace of Christ.

Q. 9. How, then, can we maintain that all works done before we have a sense of the pardoning love of God are sin? And, as such, an abomination to Him?

A. The works of him who has heard the gospel and does not believe are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done. Therefore they are sinful. And yet we know not how to say that they are abomination to the Lord in him who feareth God, and from that principle does the best he can.

Q. 10. Seeing there is so much difficulty in this subject, can we deal too tenderly with them that oppose us?

A. We cannot, unless we give up any part of the truth of God.

There is much illumination in these questions and answers. In anticipation of events we may say that Wesley did not change his opinions on these vexed questions. In his *Notes upon the New Testament* his comment on the prayers and alms of Cornelius is: 'Dare any man say these were only splendid sins, or that they were an abomination before God? And yet it is certain, in the Christian sense, Cornelius was then an unbeliever. He had not then faith in Christ. So certain it is that every one who seeks faith in Christ should seek it in prayer and doing good to all men; though, in strictness, what is not exactly according to the divine rule must stand in need of divine favour and indulgence.' It is also significant that, in his last days, when he revised and reduced the number of the 'Articles of Religion,' he omitted the Church of England Article 'Of Works before Justification.'

The Conference considered the doctrine of Sanctification towards the close of the session on Friday. Little progress was made beyond the point reached in the preceding year. It was admitted that at first the Methodist preachers had not seen clearly the meaning of Christian perfection, although they had spoken of it from the beginning of the mission. The brief records of the deliberations of the Bristol Conference show that some advance in understanding a most difficult subject was being made, but it was felt that the time had not come for dogmatic and final exposition. Light was increasing; it was the light of early morning, not of noon.

On Saturday the Conference devoted much time to the consideration of two matters of great importance. The first related to the subject of obedience to bishops. It was asked, 'Can he be a spiritual governor of the Church, who is not a believer, not a member of it?' The answer was, 'It seems not; though he may be a governor in outward things, by a power derived from the King.' Having granted that the King might appoint a man to administer the laws and discipline of the Church, the question immediately arose: 'What are properly the laws of the Church of England?' The Conference replied 'The Rubrics; and to those we submit, as the ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake.' Then the crucial point was reached: 'But is not the will of our governors a law?' The answer is emphatic: 'No. Not of any governor, temporal or spiritual. Therefore if any bishop wills that I should not preach the gospel, his will is no law to me.' 'But what if he produce a law against your preaching?' In the reply we hear distinctly the voice of Wesley: 'I am to obey God rather than man.' We are not concerned with the correctness of the decisions of the Conference. We record them that we may indicate the deepening line of cleavage that was gradually separating John Wesley and the Methodists from the Established Church.

The other matter discussed at the Saturday session of the Bristol Conference was suggested by the circumstances of the time. The continued attempts of bishops and clergy to break up the Societies forced John Wesley to face an issue he would gladly have avoided. It must be remembered that at the London Conference the probability of the Methodists forming themselves into a distinct sect was mentioned. The Conference was persuaded that after the death of Wesley the

majority of the Methodists would remain in the Church, 'unless they were thrust out.' The belief was expressed that either they would be thrust out or they would leaven the whole Church. A year had passed, and through its course, in many places, the force of 'the thrust' had become wellnigh irresistible. Had not the time come to consider the possibility of avoiding the assaults of persecutors by yielding to the pressure and forming a new Church? Reading between the lines of the following questions and answers we are convinced that this thought was in the mind of Wesley.

Q. Is Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Independent Church government most agreeable to reason?

A. The plain origin of Church government seems to be this. Christ sends forth a preacher of the gospel. Some who hear him repent and believe the gospel. They then desire him to watch over them, to build them up in the faith, and to guide their souls in the paths of righteousness. Here, then, is an independent congregation, subject to no pastor but their own, neither liable to be controlled in things spiritual by any other man or body of men whatsoever.

But soon after some from other parts, who are occasionally present while he speaks in the name of Him that sent him, beseech him to come over and help them also. Knowing it to be the will of God he complies, yet not till he has conferred with the wisest and holiest of his congregation, and with their advice appointed one who has gifts and grace to watch over the flock till his return.

If it please God to raise another flock in the new place, before he leaves them he does the same thing, appointing one whom God has fitted for the work to watch over these souls also. In like manner, in every place where it pleases God to gather a little flock by His word he appoints one in his absence to take the oversight of the rest, and to assist them of the ability which God giveth. These are Deacons, or servants of the Church, and look on their first pastor as their common father. And all these congregations regard him in the same light, and esteem him still as the shepherd of their souls.

These congregations are not strictly independent. They depend on one pastor, though not on each other.

As these congregations increase, and as the Deacons grow in years and grace, they need other subordinate Deacons or helpers, in respect of whom they may be called Presbyters or Elders, as their father in the Lord may be called the Bishop or Overseer of them all.

Q. Is mutual consent absolutely necessary between the pastor and his flock?

A. No question; I cannot guide any soul unless he consents to be guided by me. Neither can any soul force me to guide him if I consent not.

Q. Does the ceasing of this consent on either side dissolve the relation?

A. It must in the nature of things. If a man no longer consent to be guided by me, I am no longer his guide; I am free. If one will not guide me any longer, I am free to seek one who will.

Q. But is the shepherd free to leave his sheep? Or the sheep to leave their shepherd?

A. Yes; if one or the others are convinced it is for the glory of God and the superior good of their souls.

Q. How shall we treat those who leave us?

A. (1) Beware of all sharpness, or bitterness, or resentment; (2) Talk with them once or twice at least; (3) If they persist in their design, consider them as dead, and name them not unless in prayer.

Those who scrutinize these decisions of the Conference will not fail to see the outlines of a new Church in this country. The foundations are traced, and in the course of time the spiritual house will be erected.

Having considered these important topics the Conference deliberated on the best method of repelling the attacks of the clergy. Wesley's great forbearance has frequently excited our surprise, but the Conference was of opinion that another method should be tried. It was not enough to stand on the defensive and endure assaults. The time had come when the charges brought against the Methodists should be refuted. The mouths of the assailant clergy must be stopped, only in meekness and love; and the eyes of others must be opened. Wesley was beginning to learn the truth of the military adage that attack is often the best method of defence.

We have dwelt on the most important matters discussed at the Bristol Conference, and it is only necessary to refer briefly to a few additional items of interest in the business. We find that the distinction between 'assistants' and 'helpers' is beginning to be recognized. A list of the former is given. In it are the following names: Jonathan Reeves, James Wheatley, John Nelson, John Bennet, John Trembath, Francis Walker, Thomas Maxfield, Thomas Richards, John Downes, Thomas Westell, James Jones, Samuel Larwood, Henry Millard, and Thomas Meyrick. For their benefit a 'rule' was added to the *Twelve Rules of an Assistant*: 'You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most.' The question of 'a seminary for labourers' was again considered, and it was

decided that it could not be commenced ' till God gives us a proper tutor.'

As to Wesley's work, it was not deemed advisable that he should ' travel less in order to write more ' ; but he was requested to prepare (1) Advice to the Methodists ; (2) Dialogues ; (3) Appeal to all ; (4) To finish the *Farther Appeal* ; (5) Sermons. The last business of the Conference was to agree that it should reassemble in Bristol, if God permit, in January of the new year. So far as the time of meeting is concerned, the arrangement was not carried out. The next Conference was held in Bristol in May, 1746, and gradually the practice of holding a ' yearly Conference of the People called Methodists ' became the custom.

XVIII

GEORGIAN BISHOPS

Dr. Stubbs, in his chapter on the Anglo-Saxon Church in his *Constitutional History of England*, often arrests us by sentences that bring the light of far-distant days around us. Again and again we learn invaluable lessons. Let us escape from the eighteenth century for a time and consider what he says of the manner in which England was evangelized in 'the bright days' of the early Anglo-Saxon Church. It may be possible to find points of resemblance between Wesley's methods and those employed in the age to which Dr. Stubbs refers. Guided by him, we find that in those days the Court was the chief mission station. It was the centre from which the preachers went into the outlying settlements to attempt the conversion of the heathen people who had swarmed into Britain. In the earlier period of Saxon Christianity it was customary for the lords of land where there were no churches to erect crosses of wood or stone to which the people might come to offer their prayers. The mission preachers knew these crosses well. Some were erected in villages; others stood in the glades of pasture land which had been recovered from the forests, pasture land which was still encompassed with thickets of thorn, hazel, alder, holly, bramble, and brier.[1] In these cross-thwaites the itinerants took their stand and told the story of the love of Christ, who died for sinful men. The itinerant evangelists were strongly supported by their bishops. When exhausted by their difficult and dangerous work, the doors of the bishops' houses were open to receive them. They found a welcome to a calm retreat. There they rested, and refreshed themselves by spiritual communion with men who were in sympathy with their work. Then they went out again, not only with renewed strength, but uplifted by the conviction

[1] Atkinson's *Moorland Parish*, 412.

that their mission had the approval of the highest officers of the Church.[1]

The evangelization of heathen England was hastened by the fearless work of the open-air preachers. They were generally monks who possessed the power to arrest the attention and touch the hearts of the people who clustered around them. It is essential that we should remember that some of these pioneers were bishops. If we should forget that fact we have only to glance in the direction of Lichfield, and call to mind the name of St. Chad. He was the bishop of the Mercians and Lindisfarne from 669 to 672. He had an immense diocese. Dr. Giles, one of the editors of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of England*, tells us that ' it was not much less than the Northumbrian kingdom, having all the counties which compose the Midland circuit, and Staffordshire, with part of Shropshire and Cheshire.'[2] He set up his seat at Lichfield, where he would willingly have stayed in his cell, studying his books and instructing the monks who placed themselves under his care. But he had been one of the little band of men who had been trained by St. Aidan at Lindisfarne, and he had caught his missionary spirit. For a time he had lived with his brother Cedd, the bishop of the East Saxons, and the abbot of the monastery of Lastingham, which at first was a Celtic monastery, but, like many others in the north of England, afterwards embraced the rule of St. Benedict. When his brother died he committed the care of the community to St. Chad. During his residence at the moorland monastery he became, for a time, bishop of York. He took up the burden of his office and discharged its duties. Bede says he travelled about, not on horseback, but after the manner of the apostles, on foot. He preached the gospel in towns and in the open country, in cottages, villages, and castles, following the example of St. Aidan and his own brother. His strenuous work attracted the attention of Archbishop Theodore. Once, when they met, the Archbishop succeeded in compelling him to lighten his toils. Seeing that it was his custom to go about the work of the gospel on foot rather than on horseback, Theodore commanded him to ride whenever he had a long journey to undertake.

[1] *Constitutional History of England*, i., 257–258.

[2] Bohn's *Antiquarian Library* ed., 174. Northumbria spread from the Humber to Edinburgh.

Finding him very unwilling to change his former practice, the Archbishop lifted him on the horse. He thought him a holy man, and therefore obliged him to ride wherever he had need to go.[1] It was impossible that St. Chad, when he became the bishop of the Mercians, could lay aside the pioneer work which he had carried on for many years. The clarion voice of conscience was as insistent as ever, and with perfect loyalty it was obeyed. On March 2, 672, he died. According to the well-known legend, when sitting in his oratory a few days before his death he heard, on a sudden, the voices of persons singing and rejoicing. The singers appeared to be descending from heaven. The music filled the oratory and all about it. He listened; and, after about half an hour, the song gradually faded. It passed towards the skies with inexpressible sweetness. After thinking for a while he called Owini, a monk of great merit who had been working in the fields. He also had heard the celestial music. St. Chad gave him this explanation: 'They were angelic spirits, who came to call me to my heavenly reward, which I have always longed after; and they promised they would return seven days hence and take me away with them.' Seven days afterwards he was numbered with the blessed who die in the Lord, and whose works do follow them.[2]

It is with reluctance that we turn from these 'bright days' and commence our journey to the eighteenth century, but on our downward way we shall sometimes look on scenes that illustrate the advantages possessed by preachers who, instead of lingering in the churches, go out to the multitude. Broad-minded men pronounce with respect the name of St. Francis of Assisi. He was born in 1182, and became the founder of the Grey Friars. In 1224 the Grey Friars found their way to England, and we picture them as they wander among the towns and villages. We see them in their dress of coarse brown cloth, with a long, pointed hood and a short cloak; they are girded with a knotted cord, and go barefoot. These open-air preachers achieved great success. When the monasteries were suppressed, in the sixteenth century, they had more than sixty establishments in this country.[3]

[1] See Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, 174, Bohn's ed.

[2] See Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, p. 176. The Rev. R. Hyett Warner's *Life and Legends of Saint Chad* and other authorities have been consulted.

[3] See Cardinal Gasquet's *English Monastic Life*, 237.

Towards the close of the fourteenth century, once more we meet with the open-air preacher. This time he is a follower of Wiclif. Let us see him through Mr. George Macaulay Trevelyan's eyes. Describing the Lollards, he says:

> Individual eccentricity had little place among the preachers, who could be easily recognized by their long, russet-coloured gowns with deep pockets, their peculiar speech interlarded with phrases of Scripture, the sanctity of their demeanour, their habit of basing every argument on some injunction found in 'God's Law,' and their abhorrence of the common oaths of the day, for which they substituted 'I am sure,' 'It is sooth,' 'Without doubt it is so.' The clergy of the neighbourhood noted with alarm how they resembled each other in manners, language, and doctrine, and how with unity came strength. They preached no doctrines subversive of order or hostile to lay property; on the contrary, they cultivated the friendship, not only of the wealthy citizens, but of the knights and gentry. . . . When the unauthorized preacher walked into a new village his russet gown at once betrayed his errand, and if both the landlord and the parson were against him, his chance of getting a hearing was small. But on friendly ground his reception was very different.[1]

They preached in churches and churchyards; and in such places as London, Bristol, and Leicester they gathered together large companies of followers. In other parts of the country, under favourable circumstances, the Lollard preachers, whose enthusiasm and energy even their foes could not deny, produced extraordinary effects. In Bristol Mr. Hunt tells us that, 'while the great mercantile families and probably the majority of the people adhered to the old doctrines, the town, next after London, became the stronghold of Lollardy.' The western city was much influenced by the preaching of John Purvey, a priest of the diocese of Lincoln, who was the intimate friend and disciple of Wiclif. Casting aside his priestly garb and assuming the dress of a layman, he was accustomed to stand on the steps of one of the many crosses that adorned the town, preaching the doctrines of the new reformation. He was a hard hitter, and struck heavy blows at the teaching of the Romanists concerning transubstantiation and aural confession. He declared that the authority of the priest depended upon his personal holiness—a declaration that goes right down to the roots of sacerdotal pretensions. Mr. Hunt says of him, 'Right or wrong, there was nothing extravagant in what he

[1] *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, pp. 317–319.

said; and, like his master, with whom he often dwelt, and unlike some of his master's followers, he was, as far as we know, guiltless of pandering to lawlessness and anarchy.'[1]

Mr. Trevelyan, speaking of the first generation of Lollards, says that they lacked one quality without which such a cause as theirs could never triumph. They were not ready to be martyrs. John Purvey illustrates the truth of this assertion. The famous statute *De Haeretico Comburendo*, was passed in 1401. It was directed against the progress of doctrinal heresy on the complaint of the bishops that their own officers, without State help, were unable to restrain Lollardy. The statute provided means for the burning of heretics, which legally existed before but were recapitulated and approved with a view to energetic use. Purvey was brought up for trial, in his old age, in March, 1401; but, says Trevelyan, 'He could not find the strength to die by torture for the opinions which he had held so long. But the on-coming generation of Lollards contained men of firmer mould. Three days before Purvey read his recantation at St. Paul's Cross William Sawtre had been burned for teaching that 'after the consecration by the priest there remaineth true material bread.' He suffered in Smithfield.[2]

Having glanced at the remote past, we must now concentrate our attention on the men who occupied the English bishoprics in 1745. How many of them were eager to attempt the task of evangelising the multitudes that stood outside all the Churches? If they could not attempt that rough and dangerous work themselves, how many of them were ready to help the fearless evangelists of their own Church who had gone out into the wilderness to find and fold the scattered sheep? It is in no spirit of satire that we ask these questions. If we can find a St. Chad among the bishops of the eighteenth century, great will be our joy. We shall certainly not find him in the see of Lichfield, but we will look elsewhere. We are not inclined to join in the sweeping denunciations of the bishops of that day, but our questions must be pressed. In order that an impartial answer may be given we will let Mr. Abbey speak. He was a loyal Churchman, who was distinguished by the fairness of his criticism, and by his power to appreciate the

[1] *Bristol*, 88, Historic Towns Series.

[2] *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, pp. 319, 334.

value of the work done by Methodists. At the close of the first volume of his valuable work on *The English Church and its Bishops*, 1700–1800, he gives a general account of the action of the bishops in regard to Methodism. He says :

Their attitude in the matter is illustrative both of the men and of their times. On no one point is there a greater change for the better in the Episcopate of our own days than in their greatly increased sympathy in the feelings and interests of the masses. Eighteenth-century bishops seem to have had very little in common with the general bulk of the population. The clergy, whatever might be their faults, at all events lived among the people, and were a part of them. The bishops, even those of them who had risen quite out of the ranks, lived for the most part in quite a different world. They made, in somewhat formal and ceremonial manner, their confirmation tours, but otherwise they seem to have associated almost exclusively with the upper classes of society, with the superior clergy, and with men of study and letters. They preached far less than now before large popular assemblies ; the public meeting and the busy committee-room were almost unknown to them ; they troubled themselves—speaking of the great majority—but very little with wide plans for improving the condition of the people, and for instituting and organising new forms of spiritual machinery. Their official work completed, they retired with a thoroughly satisfied conscience to fill up the long remainder of the day in the quiet employments of study or of society, of friendships or of hospitality. The graver and more serious had abundant time for theological reading, and of devoting as much labour as they chose to the work of meeting the arguments of the Deist or the Arian, the Roman Catholic or the Methodist. Those who preferred other studies could follow out without blame or compunction their classical, or literary, or scientific, or antiquarian tastes. Some, no doubt, took great interest in various charitable institutions, but with rare exceptions there was sadly little in common between them and the multitude, whose irreligion they deplored, who hung with pangs of awakened conscience upon the impassioned lips of Whitefield. Enthusiasm, which to their minds was synonymous with gross fanaticism, seemed scarcely less formidable to them than infidelity itself. In one sense it was almost more alarming. For unbelief, or what was generally held to be such, was a familiar enemy, against whom the more learned of them were trained, equipped, and prepared. Enthusiasm was a new opponent, or rather it might be the requickening into life of a power which a century before had dashed to the ground crowns and mitres, churches and constitutions. They knew not what it might be, or how far, if it gained head, it might corrupt all pure and reasonable religion. Little or nothing of it came before their actual sight and hearing, but they were informed to some extent of its excitements and irregularities. The dim and scarcely intelligible murmur of it reached them in their cathedrals and their studies ; and now and then they were perplexed with questions from

incumbents who knew no better than themselves what to make of these new lights. Moreover, they had tasted to the full the sweets of tranquillity and peace. A sort of cultivated indolence, not unliterary and not altogether undevout, had stolen over them. But now these wandering preachers must have awakened in them some uneasy thoughts. Their dignified leisure did not stand out in very favourable contrast with the unwearied activity of many among these itinerants. Nor were such reflections left to themselves only to make. Many of the preachers, even while they yet claimed to be true members of the National Church, were very unsparing in their censures of the slackness, which they asserted to be everywhere common both among bishops and clergy. While, therefore, the majority of the Episcopate were inclined to condemn the Methodists, as doing more harm by their excesses than they did good by their zeal, we can scarcely doubt that this mistrust of the movement was generally blended with something of more personal feeling. In the end the stimulus of the Methodist Revival was scarcely less beneficial than that of the evangelicals in reawakening the energies of the Church ; but for the time, both in their merits and defects, the average bishop and the average Methodist were as opposite to one another in thought and sympathy as worthy Christian men well could be. . . .

As a class, the bishops of the greater part of the eighteenth century were undoubtedly deficient, although not so much by their own fault as by the general circumstances of the age. As individuals, there were a number of excellent men who, in times when the general standard of episcopal duty was higher, would doubtless have been as exemplary as bishops as they were estimable in their private and personal capacity. Nor indeed was the age, even as it was, altogether wanting in excellent prelates who discharged their offices in a manner worthy of any time.[1]

In Mr. Abbey's description of the bishops of the eighteenth century there is a careful distribution of light and shade. The shadows are abundant and the picture is gloomy, but the darkness is again and again relieved by a gleam of sunshine. If this relief had not been given we should have had reason to question Mr. Abbey's skill as a literary artist. But he is true to himself, and has followed his invariable practice of seeing the better side of men and movements, and of tempering justice with mercy.

Confining our attention to the bishops of 1745, we have no difficulty in indicating several who command our respect. We look across the Irish Sea to the Isle of Man. There is Thomas Wilson, the Bishop of Sodor and Man from 1697 to 1755, no less than fifty-eight years, and who administered the affairs of

[1] i., 396–399.

his diocese in a way which excited the amazement and admiration of all Churchmen to whom his fame was known. Queen Anne, George I, and Queen Caroline all wished him to leave the island for a richer see in England, but his answer was sufficient: 'Nay, I will not leave my wife in my old age because she is poor.' Mr. Abbey's description of his work in the Isle of Man abounds with interest. We note that from the beginning of his episcopate he introduced Religious Societies into his diocese, and made attendance at them a principal feature in his system of discipline. Cruttwell, his biographer, says that 'he was a great friend of toleration. The Roman Catholics in the island loved and esteemed him, and not unfrequently attended his sermons and the prayers. The Dissenters, too, attended even the communion service, as he had allowed them a liberty to sit or stand, which, however, they did not make use of. A few Quakers who resided in the island held him in high honour.' Tyerman records the fact that he was so respected by the Moravian brotherhood as to be chosen 'Antecessor of their General Synod,' and Mr. Abbey says, 'It was only against opinions suspected of a rationalizing tendency that his wide-hearted charity was closed.'[1]

Another name always stirs not only our admiration but our affection. It is that of Martin Benson, the Bishop of Gloucester from 1734 to 1752. A friend writing of him has said:

> He was from his youth to his latest age the delight of all who knew him. His manner of behaviour was the result of great natural humanity polished by a thorough knowledge of the world, and the most perfect in good breeding, mixed with a dignity which, on occasions that called for it, no one more properly supported. His piety, though awfully strict, was inexpressibly amiable. It diffused such a sweetness through his temper, and such a benevolence over his countenance, as none who were acquainted with him can ever forget. . . . He looked upon all that the world calls important—its pleasures, its riches, its various competitions—with a playful and good-humoured kind of contempt, and could make persons ashamed of their follies by a raillery that never gave pain to any human being. Of vice he always spoke with severity and detestation, but looked on the vicious with the tenderness of a pitying angel. . . . Nothing but the interests of Christianity and virtue seemed considerable enough to give him any lasting anxiety.

[1] See Abbey's *English Church*, i., 60, 138–142. Overton and Relton's volume in *A History of the English Church*, contains an admirable description of Bishop Wilson's character and his work in the Isle of Man (vii., 125–136).

In quoting this account of the Bishop of Gloucester, Mr. Abbey reminds us that it was written by a friend, and that therefore it may be tinged with partiality; but he affirms that its statements are borne out by all that is elsewhere told us of him.[1]

The severity of the popular judgement now pronounced on the bishops of the eighteenth century should be softened by the recollection of Bishop Wilson and Bishop Benson. We would temper it still further by recalling the fact that in 1745 there were other bishops upon whom it is possible to look with respect. We think of Joseph Butler, Edmund Gibson, Thomas Secker, and Thomas Sherlock, and refrain from impetuous verdicts. The excellence of these men in their special spheres is undeniable; but so far as the work of evangelizing the country is concerned, we cannot seriously demur to Mr. Abbey's description of their conduct. They undoubtedly, as a rule, 'left Wesley and his fellow workers struggling bravely but alone amid insult and obloquy, to revive the power of Christianity amid a godless and perverse generation.'[2]

In looking over the bench of bishops in 1745 we fail to find a man who fully understood the signifiance of Wesley's work. We might go farther and say that, with one exception, there was no man who would take the trouble to understand it. Time has proved its profound meaning, but either through indolence, disinclination, or invincible prejudice, that meaning was not explored and discovered by the bishops. We have mentioned an exception, and we must now turn our attention to his investigations.

In the appendix to Henry Moore's *Life of John Wesley* will be found a series of letters which passed between Wesley and a person who, for the purpose of the correspondence, chose to call himself John Smith. At the end of John Smith's first letter, which is dated May, 1745, he says that as he lived at a considerable distance from London he had no convenience of a personal conference with Wesley, but a letter would find him if directed to 'John Smith, at Mr. Richard Mead's, at the Golden Cross, in Cheapside.' The correspondence continued until March, 1748, twelve letters passing between Wesley and

[1] *The English Church*, ii., 62–63. For Bishop Benson's kindness to George Whitefield see *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, p. 317.

[2] *The English Church*, ii., 77.

John Smith. Wesley's letters were transcribed by another hand, the originals being kept by him. At his death the whole correspondence came into the possession of Mr. Thomas Marriott, a well-known London layman, and the letters were first published in 1825 by Henry Moore. The theory that is now generally accepted is that John Smith was Thomas Secker, the Bishop of Bristol from 1734 to 1737, of Oxford from 1737 to 1758, and the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1758 to 1768. There are a few difficulties in the way of the acceptance of this theory. In 1745, as the Bishop of Oxford, it could scarcely be said that he had no convenience of a personal conference with Wesley, who was still a Fellow of Lincoln. His declaration that he was much older than Wesley seems to suggest that he was not personally acquainted with him, unless we suppose that he considered a difference of ten years entitled him to the special respect of a junior who was, at the time, upwards of forty years of age.[1] In addition, John Smith states in one of his letters that he was confirmed when he was fourteen. Secker was born in 1693, and in 1707 he was a boy whose father was a strong Dissenter. An ingenious mind, versed in the 'Junius' controversy, may be able to dispose of these difficulties. It is undoubted that John Wesley and his biographers, Dr. Whitehead and Henry Moore, who were both in close touch with Wesley, were convinced of the truth of the Secker theory of authorship, and their decision has been generally accepted. We will proceed on the supposition that their decision was correct.

After giving some details of the Bishop's early life, we will indicate a few points in the correspondence which will show the condition of his knowledge concerning Wesley's evangelistic work. Thomas Secker was born at Sibthorpe, in Northamptonshire, where his father had a small estate. He was educated first at a Dissenters' seminary kept by Timothy Jollie at Attercliffe, near Sheffield. His master was the son of Thomas Jollie, who was ejected from his living in Lancashire, and who, 'after his non-conformity, for preaching suffered more abundant vexations and persecutions than most of his brethren.'[2] In 1710 he was admitted to the well-known

[1] The consultations concerning West Street Chapel and other matters may have been by letter.

[2] Bogue and Bennett's *History of Dissenters*, ii., 19.

academy of Mr. Samuel Jones, of Gloucester. Dr. Isaac Watts partly defrayed his expenses, and he found himself in one of the best Dissenting academies in the country. On November 18, 1711, he wrote a letter to Dr. Watts acknowledging his indebtedness to him, and giving him a long account of the course of study he was pursuing. The letter was written from Gloucester, but in it there is an intimation of the removal of the academy in the spring to another place. In Bogue and Bennett's *History* there is a chapter on 'The Method of Education in the Dissenting Seminaries' in which Secker's letter to Dr. Watts is given at length.[1] When that chapter is read we see that the method reached, if it did not surpass, the University standards. It must be remembered that several of the masters in the academies had been University tutors, who had lost their positions by the passing of the Act of Uniformity of 1662. They carried their enthusiasm for the higher education into the seminaries, and found there opportunities for realizing their ideals. Up to the close of the reign of Queen Anne they had been in constant jeopardy, and many had to break up their schools and wander into other neighbourhoods to escape from the penalties of 'the persecuting Acts.' But better days were coming. In 1714 George I began to reign, and the acuteness of 'the terror' gradually disappeared. There can be no doubt that England owes a great debt to the Nonconformists for their enthusiasm for education in the dark days when the Universities were closed against them.

Dyde, in his *History and Antiquities of Tewkesbury*, written at the close of the eighteenth century, informs us that 'formerly there was an eminent academy at Tewkesbury, at which some distinguished characters received their early education.'[2] There can be no doubt that the reference is to the academy of Samuel Jones, which had been removed from Gloucester. Let us look at three of these 'distinguished characters.' Our attention is, first of all, attracted by Secker. He is sitting near a friend of his who is busy writing a letter. We recognize his companion. He is Joseph Butler, who will one day give to the world the famous *Analogy*. The letter he is writing will be signed 'A Gentleman of Gloucestershire,' and will be directed to Dr. Samuel Clarke, the author of the work on *The Being and Attributes of God*. The letter will be entrusted

[1] See 84–88. [2] The second edition of Dyde's book is dated 1798.

to Secker, and it will, by his means, reach its destination. We can watch Dr. Clarke as he reads it and can see his look of surprise at its high quality. Other letters follow, and Dr. Clarke's esteem for the writer is greatly increased.[1] Glancing onward, we see that this correspondence had a decisive effect on Butler's future career. Canon Overton says that Dr. Clarke continued to take an interest in Butler, and was largely instrumental in his becoming a clergyman of the Church of England.[2] The third member of the group in the Tewkesbury Academy is Samuel Chandler. He remained true to his Nonconformist convictions, and to his old friends, Joseph Butler and Thomas Secker. His profound learning is eagerly recognized by all who know the part he took in the Deistic controversy.

When Secker left the Academy he was undecided as to his future course. He had closely studied the questions at issue between the English Church and Nonconformity, and his convictions were in favour of the latter. While in a state of suspense he made up his mind to go to the Continent and study medicine. He took a medical degree at Leyden, after having attended lectures in Paris from 1718 to 1719. He stayed in Leyden for three months, and there met a man whose influence brought him to decision. They formed an enduring friendship. When we say that his new acquaintance was Martin Benson the result will be anticipated. The united efforts of Benson and Butler, together with the arguments of Samuel Clarke, led him to 'conform.' He entered as a gentleman-commoner at Exeter College, Oxford, took his degree after only twelve months' residence, his Leyden degree being taken into consideration, and was ordained in 1722 by Bishop Talbot. Before entering the University Butler had used his influence with the bishop's son, Edward Talbot, and had extracted a promise from him that if Secker entered the Church he should be provided with a living. This arrangement was carried out, and Bishop Talbot gave him the rich living of Houghton-le-Spring, which he afterwards exchanged for Ryton. In 1725 he married the sister of Bishop Benson, who seems to have possessed the charm of her brother. It was a most happy marriage. From this point Secker went steadily upward,

[1] The correspondence is contained in Dr. Samuel Clarke's and in Dr. Butler's collected *Works*.

[2] *A History of the English Church*, vii., 112.

until, as we have said, he became the Archbishop of Canterbury. For our purpose it is necessary to remember that when the 'John Smith' correspondence occurred he had been the Bishop of Bristol, and was the Bishop of Oxford—two cities closely connected with Wesley's work.

If we assign the 'John Smith' letters to Bishop Secker as their writer it is evident that he succeeded in concealing the fact that during the most impressionable years of his life he had been a Dissenter. In reading his views on doctrine, and on Wesley's 'irregular' preaching, we never seem to come in contact with a man who was brought up in the home of 'a pious Presbyterian,' and who was trained in Samuel Jones' Academy. He himself had been an occasional preacher among the Dissenters, and had spent much time in balancing the antagonistic claims of Presbyterianism and Episcopacy, not being able to come to a decision without much thought. He writes as if he knew nothing of the evangelical teaching and preaching of the men who endured hardness during the years of persecution which followed the passing of Charles II's Act of Uniformity. As for the men who, at the risk of their liberty, continued their work as tutors in the Dissenters' academies, he is silent.

It is only necessary to indicate two salient points which occur in the 'Smith' correspondence. The first refers to doctrinal teaching, and the second to 'irregularities.' As to the teaching, John Smith asserts that the Methodists preached sundry singular and erroneous doctrines; how many it was perhaps not easy to say; but he contents himself by mentioning three: 'Unconditional Predestination,' 'Perceptible Inspiration,' and 'Sinless Perfection.' As to the first, Wesley had no difficulty in showing that whatever other so-called Methodists might teach, he and those associated with him did not preach 'Unconditional Predestination.' 'John Smith' then had to explain that he had referred to the teaching of George Whitefield. The explanation was accepted by Wesley, who said that he was not responsible for Whitefield's statements. Then the controversy on the remaining charges proceeded on its way. Those who are compelled to follow its devious course will regret that at the outset there was no agreement between the disputants as to the precise meaning of the terms that were employed in the discussion. It would have helped to shorten

the controversy if 'John Smith' had at once said what he meant by 'Perceptible Inspiration' and 'Sinless Perfection.' By the exercise of considerable patience the reader finds out his meanings, and discovers that the former phrase refers more particularly to Wesley's teaching concerning the assurance of the pardon of sin, and the latter to his supposed teaching on the subject of Christian perfection. A second omission we also regret. We fail to find in the whole correspondence any firm agreement on the standard of appeal in cases of dispute on questions of doctrine. Wesley pointed to the Scriptures as the final standard; and to the Articles and Homilies as subsidiary authorities. 'John Smith,' facing the point, says he is aware that 'the Creeds, Articles, &c.,' of a Church were commonly spoken of as the whole doctrine of such Church, but he affirmed that the doctrine of any Church is really 'its Creeds, Articles, &c., as generally understood and interpreted by its living pastors.' This definition of the doctrinal standard of a Church may charm those who believe that each generation is wiser than its predecessor, but we must bear in mind that the 'living pastors' of 'John Smith's' day were the clergy of the eighteenth century. It is no wonder that Wesley declined to accept their 'general understanding and interpretation' of profound Christian doctrines as the standard of appeal. In the absence of precise definitions, and of an agreement on a standard of appeal, it was inevitable that the disputants failed to convince each other on the questions of doctrine which occupy such a prominent place in their prolonged correspondence.

The careful reader of these letters will regret the failure. We have shown that on the questions of assurance and Christian perfection John Wesley was always ready to welcome clearer light. After his own conversion the subject of assurance occupied his eager attention. He went to Germany, and had long conversations at Herrnhut with Christian David, Michael Linner, and other officers and members of the Moravian Church, and found that among them there was a variety of experience concerning assurance. In that variety he found consolation in his own perplexities.[1] In the course of his evangelistic mission the question constantly emerged, and we have seen that in the early Conferences it was closely examined. If his

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, 206–208.

correspondent could have helped him he would have been grateful to him, but 'John Smith' confesses that he did not know one of his pious acquaintances who held John Wesley's view of the assurance of the forgiveness of sin. If his investigations were confined to Oxford Wesley tells him that he is not surprised. Then he goes on to say: 'You will naturally ask, With how many truly pious persons am I acquainted, on the other hand? I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not; I am acquainted with more than twelve hundred or thirteen hundred persons, whom I believe *to be truly pious*, and not on slight grounds, and who have severally testified to me with their own mouths that they *do know* the day when the love of God was first shed abroad in their hearts, and when His Spirit first witnessed with their spirits that they were the children of God. Now if you are determined to think all these liars or fools, this is no evidence to *you*, but to *me* it is strong evidence, who have for some years known the men and their communication.' Once more experience came into conflict with insufficient knowledge, and experience prevailed. On the question of Christian perfection Wesley was waiting for further light. In the meanwhile he preached everywhere that holiness must be the object of the desire and pursuit of all Christian men, and that no one had attained it until he loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength, and loved his neighbour as himself. As to the manner of its attainment, his judgement was in a state of suspense. Like an eager watchman, he welcomed the dawn but longed for the day.

'John Smith's' letters do not entirely consist of criticism of Wesley's teaching; they also deal with the manner in which he carried on his evangelizing work. It is possible to perceive 'John Smith's' better side in the doctrinal discussions, but when he turns to such subjects as open-air preaching, the employment of laymen, and the violation of Church order, his acuteness fails him, and his sympathy with Wesley nears vanishing-point. Let us examine his criticism of Wesley's open-air work. Having occasion to be in the West of England he made inquiries which led him to the conclusion that Wesley's preaching had certainly made a deep impression on many people. He determined to obtain all available information about the new mission. He was puzzled to account for its

success. In his letter to Wesley dated August 11, 1746, he gives the result of his long pondering, and the question of his insight may be settled by examining the conclusion he reached. He says :

> How shall we account for the considerable success of your itinerant preaching ? It must be owned that you have a natural knack of persuasion, and that you speak with much awakening warmth and earnestness ; that God has blessed you with a strength of constitution equal to the indefatigable industry of your mind. These natural abilities, then, without having recourse to anything supernatural or miraculous, might alone account for the measure of your success. Yet there is another thing which gives you more advantage, and occasions you to make more impression than all these put together, and that is, the very irregularity and novelty of your manner. ' The tinners, keelmen, colliers, and harlots,' say you, ' never came near a church, nor had any desire or design so to do.' But when it was told them, ' There is a man preaching upon yonder mountain,' they came in as great flocks to such a dispenser of divinity as they do to *a dispenser of physic, who dances on a slack-rope*. Such a doctor may, by his stratagem, have more patients, and consequently, if he has equal skill, may do more good than Dr. Mead, who confines himself to the unalarming and customary carriage of a chariot ; yet since it is next to certain that, the rules of the college once broke in upon, many unskilful persons will take upon them to get patients by the novelty of the slack-rope, it is likewise next to certain that if we cast up the physic account at the end of any one century, we shall find that surprise and novelty have done much more harm than good, and that it was, upon the whole, much better to go on in the slower but safer way of the College.

It is singular that ' John Smith ' could not find any better solution of the mystery. He was so satisfied with his explanation that he repeats it in another letter. Wesley referring to the time when he had acted as his father's curate in the parish of Epworth—that is, some years before his conversion—told his correspondent that he was ' well assured he did far more good to them by preaching three days on his father's tomb than he did by preaching three years in his pulpit.' ' John Smith,' ignoring the change that had come over Wesley and the character of his preaching after his return from Georgia, attributes his success at Epworth to the ' novelty and oddity of a son's preaching on his father's tomb.' He cries : ' Here was the same preacher, the same hearers, and surely the same God to influence (unless it were to be profanely said that there is one God of the Church, and another influencing God of the churchyard), so that the only difference between preaching in the

pulpit and on the tomb was this, that the former, being customary, made little impression, whilst the latter, from its strangeness, caught much attention. You may fancy, perhaps, that you have a divine call thus to catch attention ; but other clergymen are sure they have no such thing, and therefore hold themselves obliged to forbear the novelty of preaching on tombs, as much as the singularity of preaching on their heads.'

We have now scrutinized the episcopal bench as it existed in 1745 in order to discover a man who was prepared to sympathize with Wesley, and to examine his work with clear and friendly eyes. We had some hope of Bishop Secker, but he has failed us. Before we turn away from him, however, we must do him justice. His views, in process of the years, advanced in charity, and it is refreshing to put aside the ' John Smith ' letters and take up the Archbishop's *Lectures on the Church Catechism.* Hunt, in his *Religious Thought in England,*[1] draws attention to some of the statements contained in these lectures. In them the Church is defined as comprehending all good men in all ages, under every dispensation, who have believed and served Christ according to the degree of light which they had. It is the Catholic Church as distinguished from the Jewish Church, which embraced only one nation. It is the universal Church, which embraces all men in all nations. The Catholic faith is that form of doctrine which was delivered by the apostles. It can be learned with certainty only in the writings of the New Testament. Every Church or society of Christians which preserves this Catholic or universal faith is a part of the true or universal Church. In this sense, every individual Church which holds the essentials of Christianity is a Catholic Church. As we read these sentences we feel that we are breathing an ampler, purer air, than when we toil through the ' John Smith ' correspondence. Is it possible that a mistake has been made in attributing the letters of ' John Smith ' to Bishop Secker ?

[1] iii., 276.

XIX

WAR'S ALARMS

THE facts contained in Mr. Abbey's volumes on *The English Church and its Bishops*, 1700–1800, are invaluable. We have availed ourselves of his help at every stage of our inquiry into the crucial question of the relation of the English bishops to Wesley and his work. At the present moment we pause for a while in our examination of facts in order that we may deal with one of Mr. Abbey's speculations. It is well known that Queen Caroline exercised much influence in the selection of the bishops who were appointed in the early part of the reign of George II. Her interference was strongly resented, and there was a ceaseless contest between the Queen and the King's ministers, especially with Sir Robert Walpole, on the subject whether she or they were to have the chief voice in dispensing Church patronage. Mr. Abbey says that, so far as she could gain her point, there was no fear whatever of any political jobbery interfering with the selection of the best man. In illustration of the truth of his statement he shows that almost all the eminent bishops of the middle of the eighteenth century, such as Butler, Secker, Sherlock, Smalridge, and Potter, were selected and recommended by her. With these facts before him he speculates on her probable action had she lived a little longer.[1] He is sure that she would have taken a great interest in the Methodist movement, and that John Wesley would have much impressed her. She would have shared in the feeling against 'enthusiasm' which was nearly universal at that time among the cultivated classes, but 'the conjunction of intense religious earnestness with a trained and well-instructed intellect would probably have had a charm for the Queen which would not have been restrained by a cautiousness like that of ministers and bishops.' She would have conferred with Wesley, and such conferences might have borne results of great importance to the Church. The King

[1] The Queen died in 1737.

always maintained that ministers should have listened to his advice and made Whitefield a bishop. Mr. Abbey expresses the opinion that if the Queen, whose influence in such matters was nearly as great over ministers as it was over the King himself, had supported such advice in the case of Wesley there can be little doubt that a bishopric would have been pressed upon him. After stating this opinion Mr. Abbey continues: 'Would he have accepted it? Certainly not, if he had thought it would interfere with his appointed work. Yet when we remember how warmly he was attached to the Church of England, and how greatly he desired an extension of its usefulness, it is quite possible he might have thought that if the episcopate would in some ways restrict his power it would in other respects give it greater scope. He believed in himself, as every great reformer must do, and in the divine commission he had received. He knew his capacity for organization, and the influence he could exercise over all whom he came into personal contact with. If the episcopate had been offered him, it is by no means impossible, though it may be very improbable, that he would have accepted it as a providential opening.'[1]

Mr. Abbey differs altogether from ordinary biographers of John Wesley. He studied him with sympathy, knowledge, and exceptional insight. He does not shrink from criticizing his acts when he disapproves of them, but his criticisms show that he is always conscious of Wesley's greatness. He belongs to the select circle of ecclesiastical historians who have risen above the prejudices of his own time, and have declared their admiration of one of the greatest Englishmen of the eighteenth century. It is pleasant to muse over his speculation. We do not deny the possibility of Wesley's acceptance of the offer of a bishopric, but our conviction of the probability of such an act is among the things 'that cannot be shaken.' He would have refused to abandon his appointed work. What would have become of 'the world-parish' if he had been shut up in a diocese? If he had, for a time, accepted the provisions of the Act of Uniformity and the Conventicle Act, his liberal spirit would have been in a constant state of rebellion; he would have burst his bonds.

We may be asked to explain why such a good man as Thomas

[1] *The English Church*, i., 383.

Wilson acted as a bishop. He was ruled by his conscience, but he retained his office for sixty years. The answer is to be found in the fact that he was wise enough to remain in the Isle of Man. The Act of Uniformity, with its related Acts, did not apply to that island. Further, in 1704 Bishop Wilson framed a 'Constitution' for the Church in his diocese. It was accepted by the Manx clergy in Convocation, and was ratified by the Governor, the Earl of Derby. It was published in the Tinwald Court, and thereby became the established law of the island. Speaking of this 'Constitution,' Mr. Abbey says: 'Compared with the general ecclesiastical surroundings of England in the eighteenth century, it seems almost like a strange anachronism that it should have been through so many years a vigorous working reality. But the isolation of his little island-diocese gave full scope for the authority which Wilson commanded through the love and reverence of his people.' It must also be remembered that by the civil constitution of the island the bishop or his deputy sat in the great court along with the Governor, withdrawing only in capital cases, and thereby possessed special influence over legislation. What was the result? Describing the system of Church discipline to which, under Bishop Wilson's guidance, the Manxmen submitted, Mr. Abbey says that 'it was something like that of a Moravian settlement, or of Paraguay under its missionary fathers, or, in some respects, of Geneva under Calvin's rule.'[1] He gives sufficient illustrations in support of his assertion to prove that no comparison can be made between an ordinary English diocese and that which was governed by Bishop Wilson.

We must now banish from our mind Mr. Abbey's enticing speculation and face hard facts. It is clear Wesley could get no satisfactory guidance from English bishops; their counsel could only hinder his work. Was it possible for him to accept the advice of 'John Smith'? 'I would have an end of your headlong preaching. Take the largest and most laborious cure you please, and play the part of the most industrious curate; to this you may be regularly called; but I know no call you have to play the part of an itinerant evangelist, or to assume the episcopal, patriarchal, or apostolical, either language or office.' He reminds Wesley that he had a regular call to

[1] *The English Church*, i., 140.

another place, and suggests that he might be 'usefully and ornamentally' employed at his own college in Oxford. 'When you had found the truth,' he continues, 'how advantageously might you communicate it to the expecting youth! How many hundred, in a course of years, might you fit for regular yet zealous pastors! And to how many thousands might they, in a century or two, spread the love of God and man! These regularly raised plants, in due time, would be more numerous, but to be more sure, more lasting, and less liable, when mixed with poisonous weeds, than those which are irregularly and suddenly raised in hot-beds.' What was the practical use of this advice to Wesley? Here is his answer to it: 'You "know no call I have to preach up and down, to play the part of an itinerant evangelist." Perhaps you do not. But I do; I know God *hath required this at my hands.* To me, His blessing my work is an abundant proof, although such a proof as often makes me tremble. "But is there not pride or vanity in my heart?" There is; yet this is not my motive in preaching. I know and feel that the spring of this is a deep conviction that it is the will of God, and that if I were to refrain I should never hear that word, "*Well done, good and faithful servant,*" but "*Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.*"'[1] With this 'deep conviction' in his mind Wesley was compelled to continue his work.

On September 9 John Wesley left London and commenced his journey to the north. On the way we think it is probable that he reflected on a subject that had been mooted at the Conference, but had not been settled. It concerned the 'Seminary for Labourers.' He was deeply interested in it, for he was convinced that the work of his assistants and helpers would be still more effective if they were well trained and properly educated. He was the sworn foe of ignorance; he fought it in all its forms. But he was in difficulties as to the seminary. At the Bristol Conference the matter was considered, and postponed until there was a prospect of securing an efficient tutor. But the problem was not dismissed from Wesley's mind; as he rode along he doubtless reconsidered it. In the morning of September 10 he reached Northampton. In that town there was a Dissenters' academy that stood first

[1] Moore's *Life of Wesley*, ii., 539, 548.

in character among those which trained men for their ministry. In it there were, usually, between thirty and forty students. They were not all intended for the ministry. Under the liberal-minded man who presided over the academy other men were admitted ; but it is computed that out of the two hundred students who enjoyed the benefit of his tuition one hundred and twenty became pastors of churches. Wesley had formed the acquaintance of this distinguished tutor in 1739, and had corresponded with him and sometimes met him. At the beginning of 1745 he had written asking him to suggest a list of books suitable for the reading of his preachers. His letter in reply is dated March 15. Wesley had great confidence in his judgement, and knew the warmth of his Christian charity. The defect in his character, according to some of his keenest critics, was ' an excess of amiability,' a failing which must have made him conspicuous among the clergy and ministers of his time. He had caused great searching of heart among the Dissenters by preaching in Whitefield's Tabernacle in London, and by allowing Whitefield to preach in his chapel in Northampton. His name lives in the hearts of Christian people throughout the world.

On that September morning we watch John Wesley standing at the door of the Dissenters' academy. He soon grasps the hand of Dr. Philip Doddridge, who at that time was almost the only leading Dissenter who maintained friendly relations with him. Wesley had arrived about the hour when Doddridge ' was accustomed to expound a portion of Scripture to the young gentlemen under his care.' He asked his visitor to take his place. Wesley consented ; and, in recording the incident, he expresses the hope that the seed was not altogether sown in vain. We have no particulars of the subsequent conversations, but have no doubt that they shed light on Wesley's problem concerning the education of his lay preachers.

We are reluctant to part with Dr. Doddridge. Wesley mounts his horse and rides on his way, but we shall soon overtake him. He rides with a loose rein, and we know that in one hand he will have a book that will absorb all his attention. And so we tarry for a few moments in the academy. We regret the absence of any report of his talk with Wesley, but his voice is familiar to us. We have heard it many a time. He has spoken to us in the home, the world, and the church.

In the *Methodist Hymn-Book* there are eleven of his hymns, each one with its special note of appeal. They speak to us from the beginning to the end of life, marking all the pilgrim-way. At the baptismal font the little child is welcomed with the lovely song, 'See Israel's gentle Shepherd stand, with all-engaging charms.' In the home, at family worship, hymns that linger long in the memory of the children who have to go out into the world are sung. In loneliness and disappointment they repeat the cry to the 'God of Bethel,' and the prayer:

O spread Thy covering wings around,
Till all our wanderings cease,
And at our Father's loved abode
Our souls arrive in peace!

When the great moment comes when the decision for Christ has to be taken a tender light falls on the darkened path. Then, in answer to our prayer, the Holy Spirit shows 'that in the Father's love we share a filial part.' Led to the cross, we sing:

O happy day, that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Saviour and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice
And tell its raptures all abroad.

When we turn from home and the early experiences of the spiritual life, in the church we hear the deep and joyous tones of Doddridge's voice again and again. At Christmas we respond to the cry,

Hark the glad sound! the Saviour comes,
The Saviour promised long.

At the New Year we sing,

Eternal Source of every joy,
Well may Thy praise our lips employ.

And at Easter we 'chase all our fears away' as we

Bow with rapture down to see
The place where Jesus lay.

These hymns have cheered and strengthened the Methodist people through many years of their history, and still inspire

their courage and hope. There is another that comes to us with a special appeal when the long path begins to bend down the slope of the last hill, and the ocean of Eternity spreads before us :

> God of my life, through all my days
> My grateful powers shall sound Thy praise ;
> My song shall wake with opening light,
> And cheer the dark and silent night.

It is a restful song. The ' anxious cares ' and the ' griefs ' that have wearied us are subdued and wellnigh forgotten. There is only one more conflict.

> But oh, when that last conflict's o'er,
> And I am chained to earth no more,
> With what glad accents shall I rise
> To join the music of the skies.

That verse has been on the lips of multitudes of children of God as they have crossed over to ' the other side.' Our debt to the man who wrote these hymns can never be discharged.

On the day after his interview with Dr. Doddridge Wesley preached at Sheffield. He had intended to go round by Epworth, but changed his route when he heard that in the north the country was in a state of great commotion. The landing and progress of the Pretender had produced wild excitement, and he judged that it was best to go straight on to Newcastle. He reached Leeds, preached there, and was twice assaulted. He says that the mob was ready ' to knock out all our brains for joy that the Duke of Tuscany was emperor.' He arrived in Newcastle on Wednesday, September 18, and found the generality of the inhabitants in a condition of ' the utmost consternation.' The news had arrived that, the morning before, at two o'clock, the Pretender had entered Edinburgh. The next day the Mayor summoned all householders to meet him in the Town Hall. The situation was discussed, and preliminary arrangements were made for the defence of Newcastle. The authorities were convinced that Charles Edward and his Highland host would soon march on Newcastle, and make it a point of departure for the further invasion of England. That became a ' fixed idea,' and threatened to

create panic. On September 20 the Mayor ordered all the townsmen to be 'under arms,' and to take their turn in mounting guard. Another order caused the Methodists considerable concern. It directed that the Pilgrim Street Gate should be walled up. As the Orphan House stood without the gate it would be in peril of assault and destruction. Wesley watched all these movements with the calmness of a man who was accustomed to tumults and danger, but the order of the Mayor must have roused his concern for other people. That concern must have been increased when the news arrived of the Pretender's victory at Preston Pans. The excitement rose to a great height in Newcastle, and orders were given for the doubling of the guard, and for walling up the Pandon and Sallyport Gates. It seemed as if those who lived outside the town would have to bear the first shock of the Highlanders' advance. Some of them began to remove their goods and to quit their houses. Writing to his brother, Wesley said, 'We stand our ground as yet, glory be to God, to the no small astonishment of our neighbours.' The seriousness of the position increased. On Sunday, September 22, the walls were mounted with cannon. Most of the best houses in Pilgrim Street were left without either furniture or inhabitants. Wesley says, 'Those within the walls were almost equally busy in carrying away their money and goods; and more and more of the gentry every hour rode southward as fast as they could.' But he carried on his work. He went to Gateshead early in the morning, and preached 'in a broad part of the street, near the Popish chapel, on the wisdom of God in governing the world.' Then he returned to Newcastle and attended the service at St. Andrew's Church. The threatened danger had evidently affected the people. He had never seen before so well behaved a congregation in any church at Newcastle. The place appeared as indeed the house of God, and the sermon Mr. Ellison preached was strong and weighty, which he could scarce conclude for tears. Wesley might well reflect on the fact that 'All things tend to the furtherance of the gospel.'

Refreshed by the work and worship of the Sunday, Wesley entered on the experiences of a disturbing week. The alarms from the north continued, and the storm seemed nearer every day. People came to him and told him that he must remove quickly from the Orphan House, for 'if the cannon began to

play from the top of the gates they would beat all the house about our ears.' Before he set an example of flight he examined the position of the guns and found that they were all planted in such a manner that no shot could touch the Orphan House. He also noted that the cannon on Newgate 'so secured us on one side, and those upon Pilgrim Street Gate on the other, that none could come near our house either way without being torn in pieces.' Having made his reconnaissance, he returned to his study on the roof, and went on with important work. On Friday and Saturday 'many messengers of lies' terrified the people in the town and made them think that the rebels were just coming to swallow them up. On the latter day a spy was captured, who failed in an attempt to commit suicide. He revealed the designs of the rebels, and gave valuable information which enabled the authorities to prevent the accomplishment of some of them. It appears from his confession that the plan of the Pretender was to seize Tynemouth, which he knew was well provided both with cannon and ammunition, and from thence to march to the hill on the east side of Newcastle, which entirely commands the town. Wesley thought that if this had been done he would have carried his point, and gained the town without a blow. The Mayor, however, sent to Tynemouth Castle and removed the cannon and ammunition to a safer place. It is well known that this part of the Pretender's plan of campaign was not carried out; but at the beginning of October small parties of his army were seen in the neighbourhood of Newcastle. The time of danger slowly passed, and Newcastle was left unassailed.

During this time, when Newcastle was disturbed by 'the horrid alarums of war,' Wesley continued to preach and to visit the Societies in the town and neighbourhood. He had also other important work in hand. Interruptions were numerous, but they failed to defeat his purpose. In his study he was busy with a task which had been long delayed. 'John Smith's' first letter was still unanswered. He had not replied to it until he had leisure to write fully, and he had hoped to enjoy that leisure in Newcastle which was one of his favourite retreats from the distractions of a noisy world. Instead of being a harbour of refuge it was a cave of storms, but he was determined to wait no longer, and so he made the best of the

opportunities that presented themselves during these turbulent weeks. When we remember the circumstances in which his long letter was written we wonder at its lucidity and the irresistible cogency of its reasoning. We have already dealt with this correspondence, so will content ourselves with a single extract from the letter. In it we are able to catch sight of one of Wesley's finest characteristics. He says, ' I am exceedingly obliged by the pains you have taken to point out to me what you think to be mistakes. It is a truly Christian attempt, an act of brotherly love, which I pray God to repay sevenfold into your bosom. Methinks I can scarce look upon such a person, on one who is a "contender for truth and not for victory," whatever opinion he may entertain of *me*, as any adversary at all. For what is friendship if I am to account him my enemy who endeavours to open my eyes, or to amend my heart ? '[1]

On Wednesday, October 9, as the danger seemed over for the present, Wesley left Newcastle, John Trembath supplying his place in that town. In the afternoon he preached at John Lyddel's, in Gateshead, and then rode on, with Mr. Shepherd, to Sandhutton. He was on his way to Epworth, and preached there on the Friday evening. He had been reading the *Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, and his wonder had been excited. He came to the conclusion that the ' strange heathen ' was one of those ' many ' who shall come ' from the east and the west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while the children of the Kingdom, nominal Christians, are " shut out." ' On the Sunday he went to church and found that a change had come over Mr. Romley. He preached an earnest, affectionate sermon, exhorting all men to prevent the judgements of God by sincere, inward, universal repentance. Wesley preached at the Cross in the evening, and the next day rode to Sheffield and preached to a crowd which stood above stairs, and below and in the yard, but still there was not room. The following day he wrote *A Word in Season ; or, Advice to an Englishman*, a tract which ran through many editions. It shows that the success of the rebellion would mean the restoration of Popery to supreme power and the loss of English liberty ; that the

[1] H. Moore's *Life of Wesley*, ii., 486. We note that Wesley's letter is dated at the foot, and judge that it was written at intervals before September 28. On that day the incident of the arrest of the spy occurred. It is easy to restore ' the atmosphere ' in which the closing paragraphs of the letter were written.

prevalence of ungodliness was a principal cause of the national sufferings; and it gives an urgent call to repentance.[1]

Returning to Newcastle on October 22, he stayed there until November 4. At this time fifteen thousand troops were encamped on Newcastle Moor, many of them being foreign troops from the Continent. He wrote to Alderman Ridley offering to preach to them, and received a reply that his proposal would be communicated to the General. It does not seem to have been accepted, so on the last day of October he went to a place at a small distance from the English camp and began his mission; but, in his opinion, he did not reach the hearts of the soldiers. He accounts for his failure by saying that 'the words of a scholar did not affect them like those of a dragoon or a grenadier.' We suppose he was thinking of John Haime and his companions, and envied their success. But he tried again and again. At his last military service, on November 3, abundance of people flocked together, horse and foot, rich and poor. He observed many Germans standing disconsolate at the skirts of the congregation, so he spoke to them in their own language, and immediately they gathered up close together and drank in every word.

Leaving Newcastle, John Wesley made his way to London, arriving there on November 13. On his journey he preached, among other places, at Wednesbury. There is a triumphant note of elation in his record of the afternoon service. He tells us that he preached to wellnigh the whole town, high and low, as at the beginning. The change that was gradually coming over the spirit of the place was evident. Reaching London, he met his brother at the Foundery. He had been caring for the Societies in Wales, Bristol, and London since the Conference, and had much to tell of successful work in the midst of distracting excitement. We note that on October 17 twenty of the Methodist soldiers who had returned from Flanders dined with him at the Foundery, and he rejoiced in 'the distinguishing grace of God toward them.' On November 8, having preached in Bexley Church, he went to the front of the camp near Dartford. The soldiers listened eagerly to his words, and one of the most reprobate of them joined the Society. Two days before John Wesley arrived from the north several of the men, who were about to march against the rebels, assembled with the Select

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, iii., 215, *note*.

Society at the Foundery, and their fearlessness and confidence in God made a great impression on those who worshipped with them. During these days we seem to be moving among soldiers, and the letters of John Haime and William Clements, which are inserted in John Wesley's *Journal*,[1] increase the interest we feel in these early attempts of the Methodists to win for Christ the army of the nation.

[1] iii., 226–227.

XX

IN THE OLD BOOK-ROOM

THE year 1745 was remarkable for the literary activity of the Wesleys. In addition to preaching, visiting the Societies, and long journeys into remote parts of the country, they were compelled to spend much time in defending themselves and their people from the assaults of the Press. The defence of the Methodists was conducted principally by John Wesley, but his brother was constantly consulted, and did valuable service in the way of suggestion and the revision of important pamphlets. In addition, he was always busy writing hymns, and 'the songs of a people' are often their best defence against attacks. John Wesley quickly discovered the power of the pamphlet, and having discovered it, he used it with remarkable success. We have already given some proofs of that fact. In 1745 we are able to note certain particulars that reveal an important stage of development in the writing and distribution of Methodist literature.

When the Foundery was ready for occupation one end of the 'band room' was fitted up with shelves, and became a place for the sale of books. Mr. G. J. Stevenson, in his *History of City Road Chapel*,[1] says that for forty years Wesley used the Foundery as a book store. Let us imagine ourselves standing at the stall in the 'band-room' towards the end of 1745. We see many hymn-books. We also notice *A Collection of Tunes, set to Music, as they are commonly sung at the Foundery*, published in 1742. Then we glance at some piles of small tracts, each tract consisting of four pages, the price for a hundred being two shillings. It is well to consider them, for we are in a time long before 1799, when the Religious Tract Society was formed. These tracts were eagerly dispensed by the Methodist preachers and people. In 1745, when John Wesley was on his way to London from Newcastle, he passed

[1] p. 273.

through Doncaster. The town was swarming with soldiers, who were going north to fight the forces of the Pretender. Wesley was horrified with their blasphemies, and when he got to London he wrote a tract entitled *A Word to a Swearer*. In addition he wrote and printed *A Word to a Drunkard*, *A Word to a Sabbath Breaker*, *A Word to a Protestant*, all of the same size and price, and bearing on questions demanding the immediate attention of Englishmen.[1]

Turning from the tracts to the pamphlets, we soon catch sight of one which bears an arresting title: *Modern Christianity: Exemplified at Wednesbury and other adjacent Places in Staffordshire*. It had only just been printed by John Gooding, of Newcastle, and we see that it is 'Publish'd by John Wesley, A.M., Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford.' It is a duodecimo of twelve pages, and its price is twopence. We wonder why its publication has been so long delayed. We turn to the 'Advertisement' and find the explanation. John Wesley says, 'It was our desire and design that the following accounts, drawn up long since, should have slept for ever; but the gross misrepresentations of these facts, which are still spread abroad from day to day, constrain us at length to speak the naked truth.' It must be remembered that the sections of John Wesley's *Journal* which contain descriptions of the Wednesbury and Walsall riots had not been published in 1745; 'Part the Fifth' was issued in 1749 and 'Part the Sixth' in 1753. It was imperative that the English public should know the true story of the Staffordshire atrocities. Since 1743 the 'rabbling' of the Methodists had become a favourite sport of mobs in Yorkshire and Cornwall, and it was time that Wesley made his appeal to that sense of justice which sometimes sleeps, but is never extinct in the majority of the people of England.

Near the pamphlet on the 'riots' we see one of eleven pages which can be bought for a penny. It was written by John Wesley, and the date at the end is October 10, 1745. It is entitled *Advice to the People called Methodists*, and we turn over its pages with ever-increasing admiration. It is a little pamphlet which is 'not for an age but for all time.' It sets up a standard of charity which we fear has never been reached save by a few elect souls. As we read it in the present day

[1] For these and other tracts published in or about 1745 see Green's *Bibliography*, 41–43.

its words of gentle condemnation search the conscience; we wonder how much they affected the Christian people of the eighteenth century. We will select a few of Wesley's advices and leave them to be pondered by those 'who have ears to hear.' Speaking to the Methodists as one who knows them and loves them, he says that perhaps there is no other set of people —at least, not visibly united together—'who lay so much and yet no more stress than you do on rectitude of opinions, on outward modes of worship, and the use of those ordinances which you acknowledge to be of God.' He then continues:

So much stress you lay even on right opinions as to profess that you earnestly desire to have a right judgement in all things, and are glad to use every means which you know or believe may be conducive thereto; and yet not so much as to condemn any man upon earth merely for thinking otherwise than you do; much less, to imagine that God condemns him for this if he be upright and sincere of heart. On those outward modes of worship, wherein you have been bred up, you lay so much stress as highly to approve of them; but not so much as to lessen your love to those who conscientiously dissent from you herein. You likewise lay so much stress on the use of those ordinances which you believe to be of God as to confess there is no salvation for you if you wilfully neglect them. And yet you do not judge them that are otherwise minded; you determine nothing concerning those who, not believing those ordinances to be of God, do, out of principle, abstain from them.

His fourth advice to the Methodists is a trumpet call that should ring through the Church to-day:

Never rest again in the dead formality of religion. Pursue with all your might inward and outward holiness; a steady imitation of Him you worship; a still increasing resemblance of His imitable perfections—His justice, mercy, and truth. Let this be your manly, noble, generous religion, equally remote from the meanness of superstition, which places religion in doing what God hath not enjoined, or abstaining from what He hath not forbidden; and from the unkindness of bigotry, which confines our affection to our own party, sect, or opinion. Above all, stand fast in obedient faith, faith in the God of pardoning mercy, in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath loved you and given Himself for you. Ascribe to Him all the good you find in yourself; all your peace, and joy, and love; all your power to do and suffer His will, through the Spirit of the living God. Yet, in the meantime, carefully avoid enthusiasm. Impute not the dreams of men to the all-wise God; and expect neither light nor power from Him, but in the serious use of all the means He hath ordained.

Be true also to your principles touching opinions and the externals of religion. Use every ordinance which you believe is of God, but beware of narrowness of spirit towards those who use them not. Conform yourself to those modes of worship which you approve; yet love as brethren those who cannot conform. Lay so much stress on opinions that all your own, if it be possible, may agree with truth and reason, but have a care of anger, dislike, or contempt towards those whose opinions differ from yours. You are daily accused of this (and, indeed, what is it whereof you are not accused?), but beware of giving any ground for such an accusation. Condemn no man for not thinking as you think; let every one enjoy the full and free liberty of thinking for himself; let every man use his own judgement, since every man must give an account of himself to God. Abhor every approach, in any kind or degree, to the spirit of persecution. If you cannot reason or persuade a man into the truth, never attempt to force him into it. If love will not compel him to come in, leave him to God, the Judge of all.

These 'advices,' which seem more suitable for a millennial age than for the eighteenth century, close with the counsel 'not to talk much of what you suffer; of the persecution you endured at such a time and the wickedness of your persecutors.' The wisdom of that 'advice' became more evident as the years passed. In these modern days we shall all agree with Sir W. M. Ramsay's assertion, 'If the early Christians had given much thought to their persecution they would not have conquered the world.'

Quitting the seclusion of the ancient Book-room, we return to the light of the present day in order that we may examine more closely two of the publications that could be purchased at the Foundery in 1745, or early in the next year. The first is *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion.* In its complete form it consists of three parts, the first being published at the beginning of 1745, the second at its close, and the third, probably, early in 1746.[1] Mr. Green summarizes the contents of the *Farther Appeal* as follows: 'The first part was written in reply to several hostile pamphlets, particularly one by the Bishop of London and one by the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, in which Wesley's doctrines and his field-preaching and its effects are assailed. He vindicates his teaching as being in harmony with Scripture and the Church of England, his method as lawful, and the effects as not being "such as had been weakly and wickedly reported." Part II.

[1] See Green's *Bibliography*, Nos. 63, 64.

is an earnest appeal indeed, addressed to members of the Church of England first, and to others, on the moral state of the nation. Part III. is a defence of the whole Methodist work, and an account of the brutal treatment the Methodists had received in many parts of the country.' This summary shows that the ground covered by Wesley in the *Farther Appeal* is extensive. The document should be read carefully by all who wish to understand the serious questions which confronted Wesley, the Church of England, and the nation, in those perilous times. We will content ourselves by indicating a few points which call for special consideration.

In the first part of the *Farther Appeal* Wesley elaborates the arguments he had employed in the *Earnest Appeal* concerning his doctrinal preaching. He multiplies his quotations from the acknowledged standards of the Church of England, and shows that his teaching on justification by faith and on the work of the Spirit of God in the soul of man was in harmony, not only with those standards but also with the beliefs of the ancient Church. In conducting the second part of this contention he displays his finest qualities as a controversialist. His adversary was Dr. Smallbrooke, the Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, who had done so much mischief by the advices he had given at the time of the Wednesbury riots. But in this controversy there is no hint that Wesley was aware of the fact. He keeps his temper, and does not forget that he is appealing to men of reason and religion. In a charge delivered to his clergy Dr. Smallbrooke had affirmed that Wesley confounded the extraordinary with the ordinary operations of the Spirit, and that, therefore, he was an enthusiast. He endeavoured to set forth the teaching of the New Testament on the subject, and supported his views by quotations from the Fathers of the early Church. He appears to have persuaded himself that he had proved his case completely. He printed his charge, and a copy came into Wesley's hands. But he had made a fatal mistake. He was ignorant of the fact that Wesley was an expert in New Testament criticism and in the history of the early Church. It is probable that there were few men in England who had studied the writings of the Fathers so closely as he had done. With a cool and remorseless logic he proceeds to destroy the bishop's case. Dr. Smallbrooke was supposed to be an authority on the subjects he

had attempted to handle, but Wesley knew more than he did, and convicts him, again and again, of misinterpretation of the Scriptures and ignorance of the real opinions of the Fathers. The bishop had airily referred to the opinions of Chrysostom, Jerome, Origen, and Athanasius, saying in one place, 'I could easily add the authorities of Chrysostom and the other ancient commentators' when he had announced his own interpretation of a text. This gave Wesley his opportunity. He produced evidence from these Fathers which fully proved that they were not in agreement with the bishop, but with himself. This damaging process he repeated so constantly that at last our sympathy with the bishop is excited. It is a relief to witness the end of the process. Dr. Smallbrooke had stigmatized Wesley as 'an enthusiast,' because of his teaching on the subject of the ordinary operations of the Holy Spirit. Wesley then quoted the words of 'a modern writer,' and placed the bishop in a serious difficulty. It is essential that his illuminating quotation should be recorded. It is as follows :

Sanctification being opposed to our corruption, and answering fully to the latitude thereof, whatsoever of holiness and perfection is wanting in our nature must be supplied by the Spirit of God. Wherefore, being by nature totally void of all saving truth, and under the impossibility of knowing the will of God, this 'Spirit searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God,' and revealeth them unto the sons of men, so that thereby the darkness of their understanding is expelled and they are enlightened with the knowledge of God. The same Spirit which revealeth the object of faith generally to the universal Church doth also illuminate the understanding of such as believe, that they may receive the truth. For 'faith is the gift of God,' not only in the object, but also in the act. And this gift is a gift of the Holy Ghost working within us. And as the increase of perfection, so the original of faith, is from the Spirit of God, by an internal illumination of the soul.

The second part of the office of the Holy Ghost is the renewing of man in all the parts and faculties of his soul. For our natural corruption consisting in an aversion of our wills, and a depravation of our affections, an inclination of them to the will of God is wrought within us by the Spirit of God.

The third part of this office is to lead, direct, and govern us in our actions and conversations. 'If we live in the Spirit,' quickened by His renovation, we must also 'walk in the Spirit,' following His direction, led by His manuduction. We are also animated and acted by the Spirit of God, who giveth 'both to will and to do.' And 'as many as are' thus led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God (Rom. viii. 14). Moreover, that this direction may prove more effectual, we are guided

in our prayers by the same Spirit; according to the promise, 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication' (Zech. xii. 10). Whereas, then, 'this is the confidence which we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us'; and whereas 'we know not what we should pray for as we ought, the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered'; and 'He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God' (Rom. viii. 27). From which intercession (made for all true Christians) He hath the name of the Paraclete given Him by Christ, who said, 'I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete' (John xiv. 16, 26). 'For if any man sin, we have a Paraclete with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,' said St. John; 'who maketh intercession for us,' saith St. Paul (Rom. viii. 34). And we have 'another Paraclete,' saith our Saviour (John xiv. 16); 'which also maketh intercession for us,' saith St. Paul (Rom. viii. 27). A Paraclete, then, in the notion of the Scriptures, is an intercessor.

It is also the office of the Holy Ghost 'to assure us of the adoption of sons,' to create in us a sense of the paternal love of God towards us, to give us an earnest of our everlasting inheritance. 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.' 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' 'And because we are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' 'For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father; the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God' (verses 15, 16).

As, therefore, we are born again by the Spirit, and receive from Him our regeneration, so we are also by the same Spirit 'assured of our adoption.' Because, being 'sons, we are also heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ'; by the same Spirit we have the *pledge*, or rather the 'earnest, of our inheritance.' For 'He which establisheth us in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and hath given us the earnest of His Spirit in our hearts'; so that 'we are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.' The Spirit of God as given unto us in this life is to be looked upon as an earnest, being part of that reward which is promised, and, upon performance of the covenant which God hath made with us, certainly to be received.

Wesley does not mention the name of the author of these important statements until he has finished his quotations, but those who are acquainted with seventeenth-century theological literature will anticipate his revelation. He does not tell us the title of the book, but as we read we are convinced that he is quoting from Dr. John Pearson's *Exposition of the Creed.*

We turn to the third edition, printed in 1669, and glance over the chapter on Article viii., 'I believe in the Holy Ghost.' There we find[1] the paragraphs which Wesley has slightly condensed. Now the teaching of Dr. Pearson is precisely the teaching of Wesley on the subject of the work of the Spirit. Was he to be included in Dr. Smallbrooke's catalogue of 'enthusiasts'? We know that he was one of the 'earliest supporters and brightest ornaments' of the Royal Society.[2] In Calamy's *Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's History of his Life and Times* we see him at the Savoy Conference held in 1661. Although opposed to him in the discussion, Baxter was greatly impressed by him. He 'disputed accurately, soberly, calmly, and procured himself a great deal of respect from the ministers. . . . He was the strength and honour of the bishops' cause.' Let us take the opinions of two modern writers. Dean Hutton, in his volume of *The History of the English Church*, when mentioning the great writers and preachers among the divines of the Restoration, says: 'Foremost in some respects stands the close and laborious thinker John Pearson (1613–1686), whose work on the Creed, elaborate and recondite in its learning, recalls the scholarship of the Elizabethans.'[3] Dr. Stoughton, in his *History of Religion in England*, refers to the Savoy Conference, and, describing Dr. Pearson, says that he was enriched with large and varied stores of divinity, and was distinguished by a closeness of thought, and a judicious selection of proofs such as secure eminence to an advocate, and success at the bar.[4] In another place he says Dr. Pearson's 'common sense, mastery of learning, clearness of thought, perspicuity of style, and directness of reasoning, have secured, and will retain for him, a high place amongst English theological teachers.'[5] As Dr. Pearson stands in the light of these Anglican and Nonconformist testimonies it is impossible to detect in him the characteristics of the wild 'enthusiast.'

The quotation from the *Exposition of the Creed* brought Dr. Smallbrooke into the presence of what is known as 'the horns of a dilemma.' Wesley appeals to him to take his choice —either to condemn or acquit both Dr. Pearson and himself. He sums up by saying, 'Either your Lordship must condemn Bishop Pearson for an enthusiast (a man no ways inferior to

[1] pp. 327–330. [2] Overton's *Life in the English Church*, 1660–1714, 321.
[3] p. 297. [4] iii., 162. [5] iv., 294.

Bishop Chrysostom), or you must acquit me; for I have his express authority on my side, concerning every text which I affirm to belong to all Christians.'[1]

Wesley completes his answer to Bishop Smallbrooke by citing extracts from the Liturgy and the Homilies which concern either 'our receiving the Holy Ghost, or His ordinary operations in all true Christians.'[2] After asserting that every proposition which he had anywhere advanced concerning those operations of the Holy Ghost, which he believed were common to all Christians in all ages, were clearly maintained by his own Church, he dismisses the charge of enthusiasm in the following words:

> I could not well understand for many years how it was that on the mentioning any of these great truths, even among men of education, the cry immediately arose, 'An enthusiast! An enthusiast!' But I now plainly perceive this is only an old fallacy in a new shape. To object *enthusiasm* to any person or doctrine is but a decent method of begging the question. It generally spares the objector the trouble of reasoning, and is a shorter and easier way of carrying his cause. . . . I believe thinking men mean by *enthusiasm* a sort of religious madness; a false imagination of being inspired by God; and by an *enthusiast* one that *fancies* himself under the influence of the Holy Ghost, when, in fact, he is not. Let him prove me guilty of this who can. I will tell you once more the whole of my belief on these heads; and if any man will show me (by arguments, not hard names) what is wrong, I will thank God and him.

After having defended himself against the charge of 'enthusiasm' Wesley entered upon the consideration of the objections that had been made to his manner of preaching. It is only necessary to notice one of them. In a pamphlet entitled *The Case of the Methodists briefly stated, more particularly in the point of Field Preaching*, an argument had been used which Wesley reduces to this syllogism: 'That preaching which is contrary to the laws of the land is worse than not preaching at all; but field preaching is contrary to the laws of the land; therefore it is worse than not preaching at all.' In managing this part of the controversy he had to meet a more formidable opponent than Dr. Smallbrooke. On October 20, 1738, he and his brother had waited on Dr. Gibson, the

[1] Dr. Pearson was made the Bishop of Chester in 1673.

[2] See *Works*, viii., 102–105.

Bishop of London, and had asked his opinion on the relation of the Conventicle Act to the Religious Societies. When the bishop was asked, 'Are the Religious Societies conventicles?' he replied that he thought not, but referred the Wesleys to the Acts and Laws, and said he would determine nothing.[1] The advice he gave he himself followed, and his study of the Conventicle Act convinced him that it certainly prohibited field preaching. It is strange that Wesley did not reach the same conclusion. The Act of 1670 provides that if any person of the age of sixteen or upwards shall be present at any assembly, conventicle, or meeting, under colour or pretence of any exercises of religion in other manner than according to the liturgy and practice of the Church of England, at which there should be five persons or more assembled together, over and beside those of the same household, if it be in a house where there is a family inhabiting, or if it be in a house, field, or place where there is no family inhabiting, then it shall be lawful for any one or more Justices of the Peace of the county, limit, division, corporation, or liberty, or for the chief magistrate of the place where the offence shall be committed, to proceed according to the directions of the Act and to inflict the penalties therein contained. The Act of 1670 differed from the Conventicle Act of 1664 by the addition of the clause concerning 'meetings held in houses, fields, and places where there was no family inhabiting.' Wesley, fixing his eyes on the title of the Act, which describes it as 'An Act to Prevent and Suppress Seditious Conventicles,' argued that it did not apply to his meetings held in the fields, inasmuch as they were not seditious gatherings. He went a step farther, and contended that it was not necessary to avail himself of the Act of Toleration and register the ground as a place of worship for Protestant Dissenters. In fact, he persisted in his opinion that the Conventicle Act had no relation to his open-air services, but Dr. Gibson was too strong for him. In a few years Wesley changed his mind on the question so far as his preaching-houses were concerned. He then obtained the protection of the Act of Toleration for the congregations therein assembled.[2] We do not think that

[1] See *Wesley and the Religious Societies*, p. 225.

[2] In the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* the question of the Conventicle Act and its relation to early Methodism has been discussed by the present writer. See xi., 54, 82, 103, 130.

he ever admitted that field preaching was unlawful. He continued the practice to the closing years of his life, and was prepared at all times to accept any lawful penalty that might be inflicted on him.

Laying aside the *Farther Appeal*, we take up the second book. It demands our serious attention before closing this chapter. The first edition was issued in 1745. The book was very popular among the Methodists, eleven editions being published up to 1825.[1] Our copy is of the fourth edition, printed in 1757. It is entitled *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, by John and Charles Wesley, Presbyters of the Church of England. The hymns, one hundred and sixty-six in number, are prefaced by Dr. Brevint's tract on *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, written in 1673. It is much abbreviated, but nothing is left out that is essential to a clear understanding of Dr. Daniel Brevint's theological position. In 1871 an attempt was made to prove that John and Charles Wesley held views of the Lord's Supper such as are now taught by extreme High Churchmen. A book entitled *The Eucharistic Manuals of John and Charles Wesley* was published, in which Wesley's abridgement of Dr. Brevint's tract, the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, and *A Companion for the Altar*, Wesley's edition of Thomas à Kempis's *Christian Pattern*, were included.[2] A sharp discussion arose at the time on the subject of the Wesleys' view of the Sacrament, and its echoes are still frequently heard.

As the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* are dominated by the spirit and teaching of Dr. Daniel Brevint it is necessary to know something about him and his opinions. He was born in Jersey in 1616. He went to Saumur about the time he attained his majority, and he there studied logic and philosophy among the Protestants. In 1638 he went to Oxford, was incorporated Master of Arts, as he stood at Saumur, and the same year was chosen to be a Fellow of Jesus College. During the Civil War he was ejected from his Fellowship by the Parliamentary visitors for refusing to take the Covenant, and he returned to Jersey. When the island was reduced by the Parliamentary forces he fled to France, and became the pastor of a Protestant congregation in Normandy. Soon after the Viscount de Turenne, afterwards Marshal of France, whose wife was distinguished for her piety, appointed him to be one

[1] Green's *Bibliography*, No. 83. [2] See Green's *Bibliography*, No. 36.

of his chaplains. In Jersey and in France he had exceptional opportunities for studying the doctrines and practices of Roman Catholicism, and he paid great attention to them. In Paris he met Charles II, and attracted his special attention. At the Restoration he returned to England, and the King presented him to the tenth prebend in the Cathedral of Durham. Dr. Cosin, the well-known Bishop of Durham, collated him to a living in his diocese. In 1661 he took the degree of Doctor of Divinity at Oxford; and in December, 1681, he was promoted to the Deanery of Lincoln. He died in 1695.[1]

Dr. Brevint wrote two treatises which now claim our attention. The first is entitled *Missale Romanum; or the Depth and Mystery of Roman Mass.* It was intended 'for the Use of both Reformed and Un-Reformed Christians.' The text on the title-page is Hos. viii. 11, 'Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin,' the truth of which text he proceeds to illustrate in the case of the Roman Mass. With a great wealth of learning and experience he proceeds to examine the doctrine of transubstantiation. He utterly rejects it. He also explains and exposes the practices of the priests who claim to offer, again and again, the sacrifice which Christ made of Himself on the cross. Among other things he criticizes the use of the word 'altar,' and contends that in the Roman Catholic sense of the word its use is misleading. Dean Waterland, in his charge entitled *The Christian Sacrifice Explained*, sums up Dr. Brevint's teaching. He says:

> He was well read in the Eucharistic sacrifice; no man understood it better, which may appear from two tracts of his upon the subject, small ones both, but extremely fine. He stood upon the ancient ground, looked upon evangelical duties as the true oblation and sacrifices, resolved the sacrifice of the Eucharist, actively considered, solely into them; and he explained the practical uses of that doctrine in so clear, so lively, and so affecting a way, that one shall scarcely meet with anything on the subject that can justly be thought to exceed it, or even to come up to it. . . . It is worth the noticing how acutely Dr. Brevint distinguished between the sacramental sacrifice of Christ and the real and actual sacrifice of ourselves. We cannot properly sacrifice Christ; we can only do it by signs and figures, that is, improperly or commemoratively; but we may properly offer ourselves to God, and that is, in strict propriety of speech, our sacrifice, our spiritual sacrifice. Dr. Brevint rejected with disdain any thought of a material sacrifice,

[1] See the *Biographical Dictionary*, edited by Hugh James Rose.

a bread-offering, or a wine-offering, tartly ridiculing the pretences commonly made for it.[1]

Dr. Waterland—who is described by Overton as ' one of the few really great divines who belong to the eighteenth century ' —mentions a second tract that was written by Dr. Brevint. He says, ' I could heartily join my wishes with a late learned writer that that excellent little book, entitled *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice,* might be reprinted for the honour of God and the benefit of the Church.' It was not until 1739 that Dr. Waterland's suggestion was carried into effect. He died in 1740, five years before the Wesleys published it in the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper.* But his testimony to the character of the ' excellent little book ' is of the utmost value, especially as it implies that the teachings of Brevint's two treatises are in harmony with each other—a point apt to be forgotten by modern controversialists.

The origin of Brevint's tract on *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* is to be traced to incidents that occurred in Paris. He there became acquainted with the Princesses of Turenne and Bouillon, and at their request he wrote the tract. It was afterwards published in England in 1673, and was dedicated to Lady Elizabeth Carteret. In the ' Dedication ' Dr. Brevint makes mention of the French Princesses, and enables us to see the aim of the tract and to recognize the spirit in which it was composed. Speaking of the Princesses, he says, ' Those great and holy souls had no desire more earnest than to contemplate and embrace the Christian religion in its original beauty, and see it freed from the encumbrance which ordinary controversies most commonly throw upon it. And really, though they did understand all these scholastic points as well or better than their teachers (especially the Princesses of Turenne, whose clear and quick apprehension, and neat and unartificial eloquence, were wonderful), yet they cared so little for them that they deplored very often the unhappy necessity that had filled the Church with such weapons, and had so flanked about (to use here their expression) Jerusalem with bastions, that one could hardly see the Temple. . . . So here I take no more notice of either Papists or Sectaries, no, nor Protestants neither, than as if the former had never appeared in the world

[1] Waterland's *Works*, viii., 167, Oxford ed., 1823.

to trouble and spoil the Church of God, nor the latter to assert and redress it.'

Although Dr. Brevint laid aside his controversial methods in preparing his tract on *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*, he never quitted the positions he had taken up in his treatise on the *Roman Mass*. In the latter he had declared that the blessed Eucharist, in its own natural elements, was bread which we break, and wine which we drink; and in its institution and holy use a memorial, a sacrament, and, as it were, a sacred relic of the sacrifice upon the cross. In discussing the question of the Roman Mass in his third chapter he says:

> Hereafter we will take Mass, not according to the primary notion, as it was taken anciently, for that part of Divine worship where the elements of bread and wine were by the priest both consecrated to God and distributed to the people; which is the Supper of the Lord in St. Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 20 and *Legitima Missa*, that is, the only due and lawful administration of the holy sacrament in the old Latin Church; but, as it is nowadays abused and understood by Roman Catholics, for that other solemn service of theirs, whereby they do pretend to offer unto God the body and blood of His Son.
>
> How Mass came to be changed from that to this, that is, from being a sacrament to the being a sacrifice, and from the sacramental communication of the body and blood of Christ to men to a proper and real offering of the same body and blood to God, must be a very great wonder to any Christian who knows no other rule of his faith and worship than the institution of his Saviour.
>
> For what we call properly sacrament is a divine ordinance, whereby Christ offers Himself and His blessing to faithful people who receive them; and sacrifice is, as it were, an opposite kind of ordinance, whereby this faithful people are to offer and give up themselves, their praises, their prayers, and all such good works as God, in His mercy, will be pleased to accept.[1]

We must now fix our attention on the Wesleys' *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, and see if their teaching is in harmony with Dr. Brevint's convictions as expressed in *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*. Taking the hymns as a whole, it is easy to give an answer. No one can read the book without seeing that Dr. Brevint dominates the position. He is followed in the structural form of the book. His sections as they stand in the Preface are adopted with but slight alteration; his

[1] *Roman Mass*, pp. 124–125.

doctrinal statements are constantly reaffirmed; his figures of speech are used again and again. Those who read *The Christian Sacrament* and compare it with the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* will be inclined to look upon the letter as a metrical rendering of the contents of Brevint's book.

We should speak with greater confidence if the Wesleys had written the whole of the hymns. Our difficulty arises in consequence of the insertion of two poems by George Herbert, who held a view of the sacrament which seems to countenance the doctrine of transubstantiation. Neither Dr. Brevint nor the Wesleys held the belief that the bread and wine, after consecration, became the body and blood of Jesus Christ. But the Wesleys admitted into the *Hymns* Herbert's poems entitled 'The Invitation' and 'The Banquet,' both of which relate to the Lord's Supper. It is true that they were re-cast in shape, and that some expressions were revised or omitted, but enough was allowed to remain to justify suspicion. In 'The Invitation' Herbert sings:

> Come ye hither, all whose taste
> Is your waste;
> Save your cost, and mend your fare.
> God is here prepared and drest,
> And the feast;
> God, in whom all dainties are.

Instead of rejecting this verse, or altering the last three lines, the Wesleys say:

> Here God Himself's prepar'd and drest,
> Himself vouchsafes to be your feast,
> In whom alone all dainties are.

In 'The Banquet' they take a wiser course; they strike out some of the verses and reduce the poem to a less objectionable shape.

It is difficult to resist the charm of George Herbert, but we must turn from him, remembering that the charm of a writer is sometimes dangerous. We will now associate ourselves with Dr. Brevint and the Wesleys and see if they agree in their view of the Lord's Supper. The Wesleys accept Dr. Brevint's view that the Lord's Supper was chiefly ordained

for a sacrament, and that its first use is to represent the sufferings of Christ which are past, whereof it is a memorial. But they go farther, and hold that the sacrament was ordained to convey the first-fruits of Christ's sufferings in present graces, whereof it is the means; and to assure us of glory to come, whereof it is an infallible pledge. It will be seen that they do not accept the theory that the sacrament is a mere memorial. They go much farther, and we must accompany them on their way. The Preface to the *Hymns* is Dr. Brevint's tract in an abbreviated form, and without doubt it expresses the convictions of the Wesleys. We will therefore take it as our guide.

In Section IV. we read that in approaching God's altar the communicant ought to be fully persuaded that the Holy Banquet is not a bare memorial only, but may actually convey as many blessings to him as it brings curses on the profane receiver. In what manner it is done he knows not; it is enough for him to admire. The bread has nothing in itself which can impart grace, holiness, and salvation, but God can make it an instrument as He had used other things for His purposes in former days. In the ancient miracles the power that effected wonders was not in the instruments God used; the virtue went out from Himself. So now it is Christ Himself, with His body and blood, once offered to God on the cross, and ever since standing before Him as slain, who fills His Church with the perfumes of His sacrifice, whence faithful communicants return home with the first-fruits of salvation. Bread and wine can contribute no more to it than the rod of Moses or the oil of the apostles, but it is the pleasure of Christ to work thereby. Then follow three paragraphs which must be quoted from the Preface, as they represent the views of Dr. Brevint and the Wesleys with unmistakable clearness. Speaking of the death of Christ, it is said:

> This Victim having been offered up in the fullness of times, and in the midst of the world, which is Christ's great Temple, and having been thence carried up to Heaven, which is His Sanctuary, from thence spreads Salvation all around, as the Burnt-offering did its smoke. And thus His Body and Blood have everywhere, but especially at this Sacrament, a True and Real Presence. When He offered Himself upon earth the vapour of His Atonement went up and darkened the very sun; and by rending the great veil it clearly shewed He had made a way

into Heaven. And since He is gone up, He sends down to earth the graces that spring continually both from His Everlasting Sacrifice, and from the continual Intercession that attends it. So that we need not say, Who will go up into Heaven? Since without either ascending or descending, this sacred Body of Jesus fills with Atonement and Blessing the remotest parts of this Temple.

Of these Blessings Christ from above is pleased to bestow sometimes more, sometimes less, in the several Ordinances of His Church, which, as the stars in Heaven, differ from each other in glory. Fasting, Prayer, Hearing His word, are all good vessels to draw water from this well of Salvation; but they are not all equal. The Holy Communion, when well used, exceeds as much in Blessing, as it exceeds in danger of a curse, when wickedly and irreverently taken.

There, then, I wait at the Lord's Table, which *shews* me what an Apostle, who had Heaven for his school, had the greatest mind to see and learn, and *offers* me the richest Gift which a saint can receive on earth, the *Lord Jesus Crucified.*

Can we be certain that this view of the sacrament was held by the Wesleys? Let us turn to the *Hymns on the Lord's Supper.* Most of the hymns in this book are now forgotten. A few are still remembered, and sung by the Methodist people. Among them is one conspicuous for its solemnity and beauty. It is a true exposition of the Wesleys' belief concerning the sacrament. Let us read it devoutly before we put aside this little volume.

Victim Divine, thy Grace we claim
  While thus thy precious Death we shew,
Once offer'd up a spotless Lamb
  In thy great Temple here below,
Thou didst for all Mankind atone,
And standest now before the Throne.

Thou standest in the Holiest Place,
  As now for guilty Sinners Slain,
Thy Blood of Sprinkling speaks, and prays
  All-prevalent for helpless Man,
Thy Blood is still our Ransom found,
And spreads Salvation all around.

The Smoke of Thy Atonement here
  Darkened the Sun and rent the Vail,
Made the New Way to Heaven appear,
  And showed the Great Invisible:
Well-pleased in Thee our God look'd down,
And call'd his Rebels to a Crown.

He still respects thy Sacrifice,
  Its Savour Sweet doth always please,
The Offering smoaks thro' Earth and Skies,
  Diffusing Life and Joy and Peace,
To these Thy lower Courts it comes,
And fills them with Divine Perfumes.

We need not now go up to Heaven
  To bring the long-sought Saviour down,
Thou art to All already given :
  Thou dost e'en Now thy Banquet crown,
To every faithful Soul appear,
And shew thy Real Presence here.[1]

[1] We quote from the 1757 ed. The use of Dr. Brevint's language by Charles Wesley is evident.

XXI

DECISIVE EVENTS

Those who have carefully watched the work of the Wesleys during the six years that followed the establishment of the little Society at the Foundery will have seen that the foundations of a new organization were being well and truly laid. In the face of the facts we have recorded it is impossible to accept Canon Overton's opinion that 'there is no doubt that John Wesley intended that his Societies should be an exact repetition of what was done by Beveridge, Horneck, and Smythies sixty-two years before.' He and Mr. Abbey certainly knew more about Wesley than any other Church writers. Their insight was quickened by sympathy, and all the Churches are indebted to them for the light they have thrown on the religious movements of the eighteenth century. But Canon Overton's assertion concerning Wesley's 'intention' must be put aside. It would have been more correct to say that Wesley intended his Societies to resemble those existing in the apostolic age. From those Societies the Christian Church has been developed. If we cannot accept the first part of Canon Overton's statement we are in complete agreement with its concluding words: 'How it was that the Methodist Societies took a different course is a very interesting, and, to a Churchman, a very sad question.'[1]

In the preceding chapters we have indicated the changes that were gradually introduced into the organization and work of the Methodist Societies, and in most cases we have noted the time and the occasion of their introduction. But we have failed to discover the exact date when the Societies were divided into classes which met weekly. John Wesley, in his *Plain Account of the People called Methodists*, written in 1748, explains the reasons for the change, but does not relieve our difficulty. He says that it was made 'about the

[1] *Life in the English Church*, 1660–1714, 212.

time' when watch-nights were introduced. That carries us back to 1742. We must rest content with the surmise that 'about that time,' in some Societies, the division took place, and that the custom gradually spread through the country. It cannot be doubted that in 1745–1746 it had become the established usage. Let us look at John Wesley's statement concerning the reasons for the change. In the *Plain Account*, speaking of the leaders, he says that at first they visited each person at his own house; but this was soon found not so expedient; it took up more time than most of the leaders had to spare; many persons lived with masters, mistresses, or relations who would not suffer them to be thus visited; at the houses of those who were not so averse, the leaders often had no opportunity of speaking to the members but in company, and this did not at all answer the end proposed of exhorting, comforting, or reproving. In addition, it frequently happened that one member affirmed what another denied, and this could not be cleared up without seeing them together. Little misunderstandings and quarrels of various kinds also frequently arose among relations or neighbours, effectually to remove which it was needful to see them all face to face. Upon all these considerations, after taking counsel with others, it was agreed that those of each class should meet all together. By this means a more full inquiry was made into the behaviour of every person. Those who could not be visited at home, or no otherwise than in company, had the same advantage with others; advice or reproof was given as need required, quarrels made up, misunderstandings removed; and, after an hour or two so spent, the classes concluded with prayer and thanksgiving. Wesley adds to this description the emphatic testimony: 'It can scarce be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to "bear one another's burdens," and naturally to "care for each other." As they had daily a more intimate acquaintance with, so they had a more endeared affection for, each other. And "speaking the truth in love, they grew up into Him in all things who is the Head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplied, according to the effectual

working in the measure of every part, increased unto the edifying itself in love." '[1]

Leaving this subject, it is necessary to face certain important questions which gave John Wesley considerable trouble during the period at which we have arrived. They had to be settled, as they affected the whole of his future work. The first concerned the school at Kingswood. It will be remembered that when George Whitefield left Bristol, on April 2, 1739, passing through Kingswood he was met by a crowd of colliers who were anxious that a school should be built for their children. They had placed a stone on the spot they thought suitable for the erection of the building, and Whitefield knelt on it and prayed for the success of the undertaking.[2] In reading the record of this stone-laying ceremony we are impressed by its simplicity, but it suggests a question not easy to answer. That question may wait for a moment, because the site of the school was changed. On May 15 John Wesley, together with others, surveyed the site, and found a better one 'in the middle of the wood.' On it the school for the colliers' children was built, Wesley laying the foundation-stone on May 21, 1739. The whole proceeding raises the question of the ownership of the land in the King's Wood. Mr. Henry J. Foster, to whom all Methodist antiquaries owe a debt of gratitude, throws light on the subject. In a valuable article contributed to the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society* he tells us that the whole question of the right of ownership in the Kingswood Forest district was in a very uncertain position. The King's rights in his 'wood' had long been most shadowy, and the once royal domain had been fastened upon by several neighbouring landowners, who, in default of much or any organized protest, attempted with more or less success to establish manorial rights over the portions they appropriated. The colliers, it would seem, by no means acquiesced in these assertions of right. In Mr. Foster's opinion, the act of the colliers on April 2 looks very much like a case of 'squatting'; and those who know the wild moorlands of England will have no difficulty in understanding what is meant by that phrase.

In John Wesley's *Answer to the Rev. Mr. Church* we find a sentence which shows that John Wesley paid for the site on

[1] *Plain Account*, *Works*, viii., 253–254, 8vo ed.

[2] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, p. 281.

which the colliers' school was erected. Mr. Church objected to his calling the school 'his own house,' and Wesley replied that he bought the ground where it stood, and paid for the building of the school, partly from the contributions of his friends, one of whom contributed fifty pounds, partly from the income of his fellowship.[1] This suggests that the ownership of some person was recognized, but the name is not mentioned. As to the contributors, it must be remembered that Whitefield also collected money from his friends, and the first edition of his sermon on *The Indwelling of the Spirit, the common Privilege of all Believers*, preached in the Parish Church of Bexley on Whit-Sunday, 1739, was printed 'for the benefit of the School-House now erected for the Colliers in Kingswood, near Bristol.'[2]

Although Wesley had paid some one for the site of the colliers' school he had not escaped from the embarrassments of the ownership question. In 1746 it once more emerged. For some time he had been brooding over a scheme which then took shape. The colliers' school answered its purpose, but Wesley's educational outlook was much wider. His visit to Herrnhut in 1738 had left indelible impressions on his mind. He had noted the Moravian system of school-work, and had studied the curriculum. He had found that in the Herrnhut school reading, writing, and arithmetic were taught, but also Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, English, and other subjects. The education, in fact, was on the lines of the advanced Grammar Schools in England. He also went to Halle, and made himself acquainted with the work done in the University. When he returned to England he patiently thought out a scheme for the higher education of Methodist boys, and, greatly daring, he took a decisive step towards the realization of his ideal. On April 7, 1746, he laid the first stone of the 'New House' at Kingswood. It was erected near 'the colliers' school,' but whether it was built within the limits of the site he had purchased in 1739 is disputable. At any rate, the New House was built. Then Wesley's title to the land was disputed; and so late as the beginning of 1761 the lawyers were hard at work discussing the matter, and Wesley was living under the threat of a suit in Chancery.[3]

[1] *Works*, viii., 400. [2] *W.H.S. Proceedings*, x., 214.
[3] See Mr. Foster's articles in the *W.H.S. Proceedings*, iii., 68–72; v., 230–237. Both the articles are of exceptional interest. The latter, which deals with the I'Anson

When Wesley was thinking out his scheme for the higher education of Methodist boys he had ' a dream within a dream.' The ' Seminary for Labourers ' was upon his mind. He longed to give his lay preachers an opportunity for securing a proper training for their work, and to do for them what was being done for the students in the Dissenters' academies. His visit to Dr. Doddridge had quickened his desire. When the ' New House ' was being built at Kingswood we know that he hoped it would be possible to make use of it as a place in which some of the preachers might receive preliminary training. His hope was realized only to a slight extent, but it was not vain. When we consider the number of Methodist preachers' sons who have been ' old boys ' of Kingswood School and have entered the ministry, we learn the lesson that a good idea lives long, and often finds expression in unexpected ways.

The year 1746 is of exceptional importance in the eyes of the student of Methodist constitutional history. It was then that Wesley succeeded in effecting the settlement of two of the principal preaching-houses. His personal possession of them burdened him, and at last he found a way of transferring the burden to duly appointed trustees. His own desire was to reserve to his brother and himself the liberty of preaching and lodging in them, and with that reservation he was content. It was fortunate that he submitted to be governed by the advice of practical men who saw more clearly than he did the necessities and possibilities of the future. In the case of the ' Room ' at Bristol and the Orphan House at Newcastle, deeds were drawn up and executed which not only vested the premises in trustees but also guarded the rights of the Wesleys. Those rights were essential to the progress and safety of Methodism. The two deeds run along the same lines, save that in that relating to Newcastle certain provisions appear which were necessitated by Wesley's contemplated use of the building as a home and school for orphans.[1] Both deeds bear the same

family, leaves no doubt that Mr. Bryan I'Anson, of Old Palace Yard, Westminster, the brother of Sir Thomas I'Anson, was Wesley's legal adviser, who rendered him great assistance in these prolonged disputes. He was a sound lawyer, and had perfect sympathy with Wesley's evangelistic work. See also Mr. Bretherton's *Methodism in Chester*, p. 45.

[1] The Bristol deed is preserved at the Wesleyan Methodist Conference Office in London. It has been compared with the copy of the Newcastle deed which appears in Dr. William W. Stamp's *The Orphan House of Wesley*, and the fact of the similarity of the provisions of the two deeds has been established by Mr. Arthur Wallington's careful comparisons.

date—March 5, 1745–1746. As Dr. Stamp's book is more easily accessible we will use it in our description of the principal contents of these ancient and most important documents.[1]

By the Newcastle deed John Wesley conveyed the Orphan House, with the yard and garden thereunto belonging and adjoining, to seven trustees. Two of them, Henry Jackson and William Mackford, were laymen residing in Newcastle; four of them, John Nelson, John Haughton, Thomas Richards, and Jonathan Reeves, were Wesley's 'Assistants'; and the seventh was Henry Thornton, of Gray's Inn, a London solicitor. The premises were conveyed on certain trusts, of which the first is marked as special. By it the trustees and their successors bound themselves to 'permit and suffer the said John Wesley and such other person and persons as he shall for that purpose from time to time nominate or appoint, from time to time and at all times during his life, at his will and pleasure, to have and enjoy the free use and benefit of the said premises as he, the said John Wesley, hath heretofore done; and that he and such person or persons as he shall so nominate or appoint shall and may therein preach and expound God's holy word.' The right of John Wesley, and those nominated and appointed by him, 'to use and enjoy the premises, and to preach therein,' was in this manner secured. The deed then provides that, after the death of John Wesley, these rights shall be exercised by Charles Wesley. After the decease of the survivor of the two brothers it is provided that the trustees named in the deed, or the major part of them, or the survivors or survivor of them, and the major part of trustees of the house and premises for the time being, shall 'from time to time and at all times thereafter, monthly or oftener, at their discretion, nominate and appoint one or more fit person or persons to preach and expound God's holy word in the said house, in the same manner, as near as may be, as God's holy word is now preached and expounded there.'

The deed then proceeds to provide for the school, and arranges the method of nominating 'poor children' for admission, and the nomination and appointment of a master and mistress, and for their removal when necessary. These provisions do not concern us. The only point that needs to

[1] For the Bristol deed see *A Catalogue of Wesleyana*, 3; for the Newcastle deed see Stamp's *Orphan House*, Appendix A, 267–271.

be indicated is the provision that every preacher or minister, from time to time appointed in the manner laid down in the preceding clauses of the deed, 'so long as he shall continue in his said office shall preach twice every day, to wit, in the morning and again in the evening, in or at the house aforesaid, as has been usual and customary to be done.'

There are several provisions in this deed which attract the attention of those who are interested in tracing the constitutional arrangements of modern Methodism to their origin in the time of Wesley. At this point, however, we must only deal with one of them. We have seen that the deed provides that, after the death of John and Charles Wesley, the persons appointed by the trustees to the Orphan House must preach and expound God's holy word 'in the same manner, as near as may be,' as it was preached and expounded there at the time when the deed was signed. It is easy to detect the weakness of this clause. The insertion of the words 'as near as may be' was fatal to its effectiveness. Even if they had been absent a provision which made the recollections of the oldest members of the Newcastle Society the standards by which a preacher's Methodist orthodoxy was to be determined was a source of peril. It was imperative that a more excellent test should be discovered. Let us watch its quiet emergence.

At the Conference of 1744 we have seen that it was agreed that John Wesley should 'abridge and print sixteen sermons.' He seems to have begun the work at once, commencing it in one of his favourite 'retreats,' the house of his friend Mr. Ebenezer Blackwell, of Lewisham. There he sat, 'far from the busy ways of men.' His companion was his Bible. He opened and read the book in the spirit which is so beautifully described in the Homilies on 'A fruitful Exhortation to the Reading of the Holy Scriptures.' We think that he must have read the second part of the 'Exhortation' before he wrote his Preface. Speaking of the Bible, the Homilist says:

> Read it humbly, with a meek and a lowly heart, to the intent you may glorify God, and not yourself, with the knowledge of it; and read it not without daily praying to God, that He would direct your reading to good effect, and take upon you to expound it no farther than you can plainly understand it. For, as St. Augustine saith, the knowledge of Holy Scripture is a great, large, and a high palace, but the door is very low, so

that the high and arrogant man cannot run in, but he must stoop low and humble himself that shall enter into it. Presumption and arrogancy is the mother of all error, and humility needeth to fear no error. For humility will only search to know the truth ; it will search and will bring together one place with another ; and where it cannot find out the meaning it will pray, it will ask of other that know, and will not presumptuously and rashly define anything which it knoweth not. . . . If we read once, twice, or thrice, and understand not, let us not cease so, but still continue reading, praying, asking of other ; and so, by still knocking, at the last the door shall be opened, as St. Augustine saith.[1]

In the spirit of St. Augustine John Wesley began his work. He was often interrupted, but he returned to it again and again. At last, in 1746, the eagerly expected first volume of *Sermons* appeared. His principal aim in his selection of the sermons he published was to set down what he found in the Bible concerning the way to heaven, ' with a view to distinguish this way from all those which are the inventions of men.' In carrying out his design he says that he had endeavoured to describe the true, the scriptural, experimental religion, ' so as to omit nothing which is a real part thereof, and to add nothing thereto which is not.'

When we take up the little volume we see that it contains twelve sermons. They are entitled as follows : (1) ' Salvation by Faith ' ; (2) ' The Almost Christian ' ; (3) ' Awake, thou that Sleepest ' ; (4) ' Scriptural Christianity ' ; (5) ' Justification by Faith ' ; (6) ' The Righteousness of Faith ' ; (7) ' The Way to the Kingdom ' ; (8) ' The First-fruits of the Spirit ' ; (9) ' The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption ' ; (10) ' The Witness of the Spirit ' ; (11) ' The Witness of our own Spirit ' ; and (12) ' The Means of Grace.' It will be seen at a glance that they deal with ' experimental religion.'

We are especially interested in the first four sermons. They were preached in St. Mary's, Oxford, before the University, and we have already given some description of them.[2] The third sermon was preached by Charles Wesley, the others by John Wesley. The reason why the University sermons were included is explained by Wesley in his Preface. It appears that some persons had asserted that the Wesleys had changed their doctrine, and did not preach as they did some years

[1] Homilies, S.P.C.K. ed., 7, 8. Compare Wesley's Preface to his first volume of *Sermons* with the Homilist's directions.

[2] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, p. 201.

before. It was a reckless charge, but it had to be met. It is true that all the University sermons had been published separately in a cheap form, and that several editions of them had been printed, and that they were widely circulated; but many people had not taken the trouble to read them. They trusted to unreliable reports, and needed to be rescued from the toils of error.

We will content ourselves with one conspicuous example. In the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth there is a collection of notes in the handwriting of Bishop Gibson. They were jotted down, we presume, to assist him in his attacks upon the Methodists and Moravians. In this collection there is a paper which throws light on the bishop's estimate of the teaching of John Wesley in his sermon on 'Scriptural Christianity,' and it is difficult to persuade ourselves that Dr. Gibson had read the sermon before he criticized it. Here are his notes. He asserts that the plain purport and tendency of the sermon is as follows:

i. That true Christianity is lost, and that there is no such thing in being at this day.

ii. That, therefore, we are reduced to the same state as to religion that mankind were in when Christ commissioned His apostles to preach the gospel to all nations, and publickly to reprove and make head against the wickedness of the world.

iii. That the heads of the Methodists are the persons raised up by Christ to recover Christianity as it was first planted by the apostles; in which respect they are to consider themselves under the character of apostles.

iv. That their commission for this end is of the same extent with that of the apostles, i.e. all over the world; not only to preach themselves but to send out preachers for the recovery of the gospel as the apostles did for the first planting of it.

v. That though they produce no evidence of a special mission such as the apostles had, they are sufficiently authorized, from the reason of the thing and the parity between the two cases, to use the same methods for restoring Christianity, now it is lost, that were used by the apostles to propagate it before it had a being.

vi. That though they do not work such miracles in confirmation of their mission as the apostles wrought, they have the like zeal to save souls; and that the quickening of those who were dead in trespasses and sins is the seal of the apostleship, as Mr. Wesley words it.[1]

[1] We are indebted to the Rev. Marmaduke Riggall for the copy of Dr. Gibson's notes.

We could have understood Dr. Gibson if he had merely expressed a personal opinion concerning the 'tendency' of Wesley's sermon; but can any one read that sermon and then declare that the bishop gave a true description of its contents and its 'purport,' that is, of its design? We should have thought that the author of *The Codex* would have restrained his imagination when dealing with a document like Wesley's sermon. These notes prove that it was necessary to issue in a permanent form those University sermons which are so distinctly marked by knowledge of the Church and the world, and so full of the light of practical Christianity.

It must be remembered that in compiling his first volume of *Sermons* John Wesley had no immediate intention of making it a standard of doctrine by which the teaching of his preachers should be judged. It was, rather, an appeal to the world in defence of the doctrines which he himself preached. But when we look at the Bristol and Newcastle deeds once more we feel that a time would come when the problem raised by the defective clause, on which we have commented, must be confronted.

XXII

THE FOUNDATIONS LAID

In the preceding chapter we have described certain matters which, arising in 1746, demanded separate treatment. Having grouped them together, we will now follow the Wesleys as they carry on their difficult work. It is only necessary to emphasize the chief events that influenced the growth of the organization and furthered the prosperity of the Methodist Societies at this period.

We must bear in mind that, during the greater part of 1746, this country was in a state of distracting excitement. The 'Young Pretender' retreated from Derby on December 4, 1745; but on January 17, 1746, he gained a victory over the King's troops at Falkirk. His defeat at Culloden on April 16 did not cause the Government to dismiss its fears. So long as he was in hiding in Scotland he continued to threaten the peace of the country. On September 20 he escaped to the Continent, but it was not until October 9 that the nation breathed freely and celebrated its Day of Thanksgiving. Even then, in many places, the ground-swell followed the storm, and excitement, suspicion, and easily roused panic continued to the end of the year. But, through all the disturbance, the Wesleys went on steadily with their work. They were not accustomed to wait for the most favourable circumstances.

On January 20, 1746, we see John Wesley on his way from London to Bristol. He is, as usual, reading a book. It is entitled *An Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship of the Primitive Church, that flourished within the First Three Hundred Years after Christ. Faithfully Collected out of the Extant Writings of those Ages. By an Impartial Hand.* The long title suggests subjects with which Wesley was well acquainted. On them he was an expert, and he would not be surprised to find many things in the little volume with which he was familiar. As he journeys, however, we note that his interest is quickened. He has reached the fourth chapter, in which the writer defines and describes a presbyter, and shows

the position he held in the primitive Church. He asserts that he was inferior to a bishop in degree, but equal to him in order. Wesley turns over the pages, and is allured by new light. He questions, wonders, reads on, and is convinced. This is the entry afterwards made in his *Journal*: 'In spite of the vehement prejudice of my education, I was ready to believe that this was a fair and impartial draught; but if so, it would follow that bishops and presbyters are essentially of one order, and that originally every Christian congregation was a church independent of all others.' The fact of the independence of the original Christian congregations had been asserted by the Conference of 1745; but the equality in order of the earliest bishops and presbyters possessed the attractiveness of a new idea. It is well known that Lord Chancellor King was the author of the *Enquiry*. Wesley accepted his statement concerning presbyters and bishops. It remained in his mind, and nearly forty years after his journey to Bristol in 1746 it determined one of the most important actions of his life.[1]

On Easter Monday, April 14, Charles Wesley and his companion, Mr. Waller, set out from London. They travelled in a chaise, and did not reach Bristol until the Thursday of that week. At that time Charles Wesley's health was causing anxiety to those who knew him. In spite of an accident that had lamed him for some weeks he had continued his work; then, about this time, the old Georgia trouble returned, and brought with it much weakness. But Bristol needed him, and he went there. He also preached in the neighbourhood. At Road he met the Society, talked with the members, and in his *Journal* made this significant entry: 'I conferred with several who have tasted the love of Christ, mostly under the preaching or prayers of our lay helpers. How can any one dare deny that they are sent of God? Oh, that all who have the outward call were as inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to preach! Oh, that they would make full proof of their ministry, and take the cause out of our weak hands!'[2]

On Monday, May 12, the third Conference was held in Bristol. It met in the 'Room,' where the Conference of the preceding year had assembled. The *Minutes*, which are only to be found in the Headingley copy, are contained in the first of the *Publica-*

[1] See *Journal*, iii., 232; *Works*, xiii., 218, 8vo ed.; Lord King's *Enquiry*, pp. 52–78, 1691 ed.

[2] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, i., 413.

tions of the Wesley Historical Society.[1] John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and John Hodges were present on the first day, and were joined the next day by Samuel Taylor, of Quinton. The lay preachers were Jonathan Reeves, Thomas Maxfield, and Thomas Westell. Thomas Willis was also present. It is probable that he was a Bristol layman who is often mentioned in John Wesley's *Diary*. His presence may have suggested the first question that was asked: 'Who are the properest persons to be present at any Conference of this nature?' The answer was: '(1) As many of the preachers as conveniently can; (2) The most earnest and most sensible of the band-leaders, where the Conference is; and (3) Any pious and judicious stranger who may be occasionally in the place.'[2]

The business of the Conference was conducted in the usual order. First, questions which arose out of the Methodist teaching were considered, the doctrines discussed being those which had occupied the attention of preceding Conferences. On Wednesday, May 14, we note a new departure. It was asked, 'How shall we try those who believe they are moved by the Holy Ghost and called of God to preach?' The answer is full. We quote it that we may see another enduring landmark in the course pursued by Wesley.

A. Inquire 1. Do they know in whom they have believed? Have they the love of God in their hearts? Do they desire and seek nothing but God? And are they holy in all manner of conversation? 2. Have they *gifts* (as well as *grace*) for the work? Have they (in some tolerable degree) a clear, sound understanding? Have they a right judgement in the things of God? Have they a just conception of the *salvation by faith*? And has God given them any degree of utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly? 3. Have they success? Do they not only so speak as generally either to convince or affect the hearts? But have any received remission of sins by their preaching? a clear and lasting sense of the love of God? As long as these three marks undeniably concur in any, we allow him to be called of God to preach. These we receive as sufficient reasonable evidence that he is moved thereto by the Holy Ghost.

Q. But how shall we know, in the case of a particular person, whether there is this evidence or no?

A. 1. We will send one of our Helpers to hear him preach, and to talk with him on the preceding heads. 2. We will hear him preach, and talk

[1] pp. 29–39.

[2] Commenting on this resolution, Myles says, 'The band-leaders and strangers were only admitted as spectators; as their numbers increased prodigiously it was found impracticable to admit them all, so that in a few years none were permitted to attend but the travelling preachers' (*Chronological History*, 45, 4th ed.).

with him ourselves. 3. We will examine throughly those who think they have received remission of sins by his preaching. 4. We will desire him to relate or to write down the reason why he believes he is called of God to preach. 5. We will desire the congregation to join with us in fasting and prayer, that we may judge and act according to the will of God.

Q. Should we not use the same method of fasting and prayer on other occasions also ?

A. Without doubt we should use it: 1. At the receiving any fellow labourer in our Lord's vineyard; 2. At going ourselves, or sending any, to a new place; 3. Before publishing any book.

Q. Why do we not use more form and solemnity in receiving a new labourer ?

A. We purposely decline it: 1. Because there is something of stateliness in it, whereas we would be little and inconsiderable; 2. Because we would not make haste. We desire barely to follow Providence, as it gradually opens.[1]

In reference to the assistants, the Conference determined that three of them should have special employment. Jonathan Reeves, John Bennet, and John Haughton were selected to visit the classes in each place; to write lists of the Societies and bands there; and to deliver new tickets where the Wesleys could not do it themselves.

The Conference of 1746 is conspicuous because by it the country was divided into circuits. The number of circuits was seven: 1. LONDON, which included Surrey, Kent, Essex, Brentford, Egham, Windsor, and Wycombe. 2. BRISTOL, which included Somersetshire, Portland, Wilts, Oxfordshire, and Gloucestershire. 3. CORNWALL. 4. EVESHAM, which included Shrewsbury, Leominster, Hereford, and from Stroud to Wednesbury. 5. YORKSHIRE, which included Cheshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Rutlandshire, and Lincolnshire. 6. NEWCASTLE. 7. WALES. To supply these wide-spreading tracts of country there were the Wesleys and the following assistants: Jonathan Reeves, John Bennet, John Haughton, John Nelson, James Wheatley, John Trembath, Thomas Westell, Thomas Richards, John Downes, Thomas Meyrick, Thomas Maxfield, and Francis Walker. In addition, the *Minutes* say, ' Perhaps Thomas Hardwick, James Jones, Samuel Larwood, William Heard, William Walker, and Joseph Cownley.' It is also interesting to note that ' Stations ' during June, July, and August appear in the *Minutes* for the first time. They were tentative, being prefaced by the words

[1] *W.H.S. Publications*, No. 1, 35.

'as far as we can yet see.' As it was arranged that the next meeting of the Conference should be in the summer of 1747 it is clear that, in the interval, the further stationing of the preachers was left in John Wesley's hands.

On June 3 Charles Wesley met the classes in Shepton Mallet, and the next morning set out in a chaise to visit one of the remotest places in the Bristol circuit. His 'charioteer' was Mr. Waller. They were going to the Isle of Portland, and they met with adventures. When descending a steep hill near Sherborne their horse stumbled, and Charles Wesley was thrown out of his seat. He fell with his back on the wheel, and his feet were entangled in the chaise. As the horse stood stock-still he received no harm, being only stunned and dirtied. It was an unpleasant journey. It rained incessantly, and on the day of the accident and the next it blew a hurricane. On June 4 the travellers were four hours in going five miles. It is no wonder that Charles Wesley's *Journal* contains no reference to the beauties and ecclesiastical associations of Sherborne. Even on the next day, when they drove right through the county of Dorset, we look in vain for some sign that Charles Wesley was conscious of the fact that he was travelling through the land of his ancestors. No mention is made of any town that would give us an idea of the route, but we think that they must have gone direct south, and passed through Dorchester and Weymouth. If so, knowing the road well, our memory of other days is quickened. Did Charles Wesley remember that his great-grandfather, John White, lay buried in the porch of St. Peter's Church in Dorchester; that his grandfather was well acquainted with the cells of its prison; that his father as a schoolboy had often raced along the streets of the old town? When the chaise went carefully down the steep hill and approached Weymouth bay, did he try to make out Preston, the little village where his grandfather sought for shelter and found a quiet grave? When he reached Weymouth he was in his grandfather's old 'circuit,' and close to the hamlets he evangelized by preaching those great gospel truths which he was on his way to Portland to proclaim. It is possible that he may have thought of some of these things, but there is no record save of his arrival in Portland at nine o'clock on Thursday night.[1]

[1] See *John Wesley and the Religious Societies*, pp. 31–38.

We think that the reason of the journey of Charles Wesley to Portland may be discovered in the name of his host. He was William Nelson, John Nelson's brother; and we imagine that the Yorkshire stone-mason had used his influence to secure this visit. It also implies a beginning of evangelistic work and a sufficient promise of success to warrant the journey. The mission was opened on Friday, June 6, when Charles Wesley preached in Nelson's house in the morning, and at noon and night on 'a hill in the midst of the island.' On Sunday, after evening service, he preached again, and the people listened with greater signs of emotion than he had before observed. The next day he preached at Southwell, and rode round the island. Then he preached on the hill at noon and at his lodgings at night. He had been disappointed by the stolidity of the people, and had relieved his feelings, after his custom, by thinking out and writing a hymn. The ride round the island, and the sight of the quarrymen at their work, suggested its first verse:

> Come, O Thou all-victorious Lord,
> Thy power to us make known;
> Strike with the hammer of Thy word,
> And break these hearts of stone.[1]

To this day we feel the passion of that appeal. It was not in vain. The evening service lasted from seven to ten o'clock. Describing it, he says, 'Now the power and blessing came. My mouth and their hearts were opened. The rocks were broken in pieces, and melted into tears on every side. . . . We could hardly part. I left the little Society of twenty members confirmed and comforted.'[2]

When Charles Wesley left Portland he turned his face towards Cornwall, where the condition of the persecuted Societies demanded the help that comes through sympathy. He passed along the route familiar to him, preaching at Axminster and Tavistock. At the latter place he met with much opposition and with encouraging success. On Monday, June 16, some of the members of one of Whitefield's Societies importuned him to go to Plymouth. He yielded to their persuasions, altered the course of his journey, and visited the town. He hesitated to go into a place where Whitefield

[1] Hymn 305 in *The Methodist Hymn-book*.
[2] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, i., 416.

Societies had become so established as to have been able to build a 'Tabernacle'; but he set out for Plymouth intending only to preach in the streets and fields.

In trying to see the Plymouth of 1746 we must forget the town as it now stands. The days of 'the triple community' of Plymouth, Devonport, and Stonehouse had not arrived. The several towns were in existence, but they had not 'flowed together.' Stonehouse still retained its ancient name, which was derived from one of its earliest and most substantial buildings. Devonport, in name the youngest, under its earliest designation of Stoke was by far the most important of 'the three towns.' Plymouth had lost its original name. In far-off times some scattered hamlets had been grouped together into a vill called Sutton. Mr. R. N. Worth, whose guidance we are following, informs us that in Domesday Book Sutton had a population of seven against the twenty-five of Stoke.[1] But Sutton enlarged its borders. In 1733, under its new name of Plymouth, its population amounted to about seven thousand, and the town had won for itself much fame and wealth during years of constant war. As we watch the town we see, on what is now called the Devonport side, certain signs that vacant spaces will soon be occupied by houses. Mr. Worth tells us that as a town Devonport dates only from the reign of William III. He says, 'Until 1690 the Royal ships at Plymouth were wholly dependent upon the accommodation of private yards. William of Orange saw the need of remedying this state of things soon after he came to the throne, for plans for "a dock in the Hamoaze" were prepared in 1689, and in the following year a little creek was utilized in the construction of the first basin and dock. This was the germ from which has grown the great naval arsenal of the west. . . . Plymouth Dock was the original name of the new town, and at first officers and artisans alike were accustomed to live in Plymouth and go to and fro their work daily. The first dockyard was completed in 1693, but it was not until 1700 that the first private house of the new town was erected, a rough wooden structure at the landing-place at North Corner, which became the principal centre whence the houses spread. There are still (1886) in this locality a few of the original dwellings left —buildings curiously compounded, to all appearance, of the

[1] *History of Devonshire*, 223.

cottage and the cabin, the self-instructed architects being at times singularly successful in transferring to the shore some of the leading characteristics of the stern quarters of the old Dutch-built men-of-war.'[1] The resident population increased until in 1733 it reached 3,361. Although the name Plymouth Dock prevailed, that of Stoke lingered. The parish is still entitled Stoke Damerel. The old church stood on its hill, the tower of which being, as Mr. Worth declares, 'the one antiquity the place can boast.'

When he arrived in Plymouth Charles Wesley carried out his original intention and preached in the open air to a tolerably quiet but confused multitude. He struck the true evangelistic note, and showed his hearers the necessity of conversion. The next day he preached again. A whole army of soldiers and sailors stood behind him shouting and blaspheming, but he says, 'A wall of brass was betwixt us. They raged, but could not pass their bounds, or stop the course of the gospel.' After this service the members of Whitefield's Society were so exceedingly earnest in their requests that he could not refuse praying with them in their room, and 'provoking them to love and to good works.' The following morning he expounded in the Tabernacle. On the same day, June 18, he preached at the Dock 'to above one thousand artless souls, who even devoured the word.' His *Journal* contains other records of visits to the Society, but we are especially interested in the fact that at his second service at the Dock, when he preached Christ crucified to a multitude, he was able to say, 'The word was as fire, and melted down all it touched. We mourned and rejoiced together in Him that loved us. I have not known such a refreshing time since I left Bristol.' After the service he spoke to several persons in private who had received benefit by the word. One had found forgiveness, and would have gone to any Society which he should advise; but he counselled her 'to stay for a plainer direction.'

On Sunday, June 22, Charles Wesley held a memorable service in Stoke churchyard. About four thousand people covered the hill. Some reviled at first, but with a few words he silenced them. The generality behaved as men who feared God. When the service was over the crowd followed him with their blessings. Only one cursed, and called him 'Whitefield

[1] *History of Devonshire*, 224–225.

the second.' The service in Stoke churchyard closed his mission, but in Plymouth he went to see Mrs. Wheatley and others whom he greatly loved because of the kindness they had shown his brethren Graves, Greenfield, and Maxfield, on whose bonds they had compassion. On saying farewell to the Plymouth people several offered him money, but he told them he never accepted any ; then others tried to persuade Mr. Waller to take it ; but he declined it, saying 'their love was sufficient.'

Driving into Cornwall, Charles Wesley stayed with his friend Mr. Bennett, and on June 25 read prayers and preached in Tresmere Church. He would receive during this visit an insight into the condition of the Methodist Societies in the county. He was in a hostile country, and was beset with difficulties. Mr. Bennett and Mr. Thomson stood firm, but in all other directions he was faced with dangers. It was fortunate that, although often under the influence of a poet's melancholy, his courage rose at once to the sounds of war. He went to Gwennap, where the Society had been sorely oppressed. On Sunday, June 29, he met the members, and to his great delight found them in a prosperous way. Their sufferings had strengthened them, and their steadfastness had made a deep impression on their neighbours. In the evening he preached to upwards of five thousand people, and his drooping hopes revived. What was the cause of the stability of the Gwennap Methodists? Charles Wesley was learning lessons which were opening his eyes to the value of the lay worker. At Road he had seen a Society which had been kept together by a layman. He shall tell us what he found at Gwennap.

> Both sheep and shepherds had been scattered in the late cloudy day of persecution, but the Lord gathered them again, and kept them together by their own brethren ; who began to exhort their companions, one or more in every Society. No less than four have sprung up in Gwennap. I talked closely with each, and find no reason to doubt their having been used by God thus far. I advised and charged them not to stretch themselves beyond their line by speaking out of the Society, or fancying themselves public teachers. If they keep within their bounds as they promise they may be useful in the church ; and I would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets, like these![1]

We have already alluded to the rise of exhorters in Cornwall. At Trewellard, near St. Just, and at Zennor, Charles Wesley

[1] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, i., 419.

met with them, and it is clear that such workers were rendering effective service in this great crisis.

Charles Wesley's stay among the Societies of Cornwall lasted until August 13. It is pleasant to notice how his forebodings were removed. At St. Ives he was astonished at the quietness that prevailed. There was not the least disturbance. He walked the streets with wonder, scarce believing he was in St. Ives. He declares that such was the condition of affairs throughout the county. It is true that a warrant for his own apprehension was made out, but it was not executed. Helston continued a storm-centre, but elsewhere he found much encouragement. He expressed his joy in the ecstatic words, 'I adored the miracle of grace which has kept these sheep in the midst of wolves. Well may the despisers behold and wonder. Here is a bush in the fire, burning, yet not consumed! What have they not done to crush this rising sect? But lo! they prevail nothing! For one preacher they cut off twenty spring up. Neither persuasions nor threatening, flattery nor violence, dungeons or sufferings of various kinds, can conquer them. Many waters cannot quench this little spark which theLord hath kindled, neither shall the floods of persecution drown it.'

During Charles Wesley's stay in Cornwall he received many letters from Plymouth imploring him to visit the town on his return journey. He went to Plymouth on August 14 and met with Herbert Jenkins, who had attended the Conference in Bristol in 1745. Charles Wesley preached in the Tabernacle and twice at the Dock. On the latter occasion he had a rough passage by boat, but when he arrived he found thousands assembled. He spoke and prayed alternately for two hours. The moon shone upon the great assembly, and deepened the solemnity of the meeting. The audience was moved to tears, and the preacher and people were persuaded that neither life nor death, nor things present, nor things to come, should be able to separate them. Returning through Cornwall, he was refreshed by the sight of Mr. Thomson, and then made his way to Bristol and London.

September was a busy month with Charles Wesley. One of its most important events was a visit he paid to Shoreham. He drove there in a chaise with Mr. Watkins, so well known for his faithful work at the Foundery, and other friends. Among them we see Edward Perronet, the son of Vincent Perronet.

The Shoreham family had moved towards the Wesleys at rather a slow pace. They had been influenced by the mistaken notion that the Wesleys were 'against the Church,' but their prejudice was yielding. On September 16, after preaching at Sevenoaks, where Charles Wesley was 'much threatened, but nothing hurt,' the travellers made their way to Shoreham, and a service was held in the church. All went well while the prayers were being read, but as soon as Charles Wesley began to preach a riot broke out. The rioters roared and stamped, blasphemed, rang the bells, and turned the church into a bear-garden. Wesley's sermon was unusually short. When he left the church to go to the vicarage, the rioters followed him and his companions, raging, threatening, and throwing stones. Charles Perronet defended him by hanging over him and intercepting the blows aimed at him. It was a fierce outburst of mob violence, but it seems to have had a decisive influence on the Perronets. From that day they were brought into close relationship with the Wesleys and the Methodist people.

On October 10 Charles Wesley set out for Newcastle with his young companion and friend, Edward Perronet. On the way they stayed at Penkridge. A mob gathered before the house at which they were staying. After beating at the door they rushed in. Charles Wesley sat quietly in the midst of them for half an hour, glancing now and then at Edward Perronet. He was a little concerned for him, lest such rough treatment at his first setting out should daunt him. But there was no need to fear. It must have been a satisfaction to Charles Wesley to be able to record in his *Journal*, 'He abounded in valour, and was for reasoning with the wild beasts before they had spent any of their violence. He got a deal of abuse thereby, and not a little dirt, both which he took very patiently.' After waiting for a time Charles Wesley rose and began to speak. He reasoned with the turbulent crowd on the solemn subject of 'judgement to come.' They became calmer by little and little. Speaking to them one by one, they were subdued; they all became as lambs, and, he says, 'very kind we were at parting.'[1] It was under such circumstances that Edward Perronet received his 'baptism of fire.'

This journey to the north was marked by several highly suggestive incidents. On October 21 the travellers reached

[1] Charles Wesley's *Journal*, i., 431.

Dewsbury, and found that John Nelson's work in that town had been very successful. He had gathered a Society together, and the clergyman, instead of rashly condemning its members, conversed with them, examined the doctrine taught them and its effect on their lives. When he found that as many as had been affected by the preaching were evidently reformed, and brought to church and sacrament, he testified his approbation of the work, and rejoiced that sinners were converted to God. If a similar method had been pursued all over the country what would have been the effect on the future of Methodism?

The next day Charles Wesley preached in a yard at Keighley. Then an event occurred of prime importance. We cannot now stay to point out its significance, but those who are acquainted with the history of Methodism will recognize it. From Keighley he went to Haworth. He wanted to see William Grimshaw, that 'faithful minister of Christ.' He called at his house and found that he and his wife were ill of a fever. The visit to the sick-room was brief, but Charles Wesley prayed, 'believing that the Lord would raise him up again for the service of His Church.'[1] Pondering many things, he descended the hill, returned to Keighley, and closed an eventful day by exhorting 'the steady Society' in that place.

On Saturday, October 25, Charles Wesley and his young companion reached Newcastle. On Sunday Edward Perronet was ill. It was thought he was suffering from an attack of fever, but on Wednesday smallpox of a favourable sort appeared. Charles Wesley was much distressed, but had recourse to his 'never-failing remedy,' prayer. During this sickness prayer was made for the invalid continually. He was raised up, and on Sunday, November 9, Charles Wesley, on returning from preaching in the country, found his young friend 'rejoicing in the love of God.' He had watched his spiritual progress very carefully, and when he passed into the full light of conscious salvation, Charles Wesley shared in his gladness. We wonder if Edward Perronet recalled those days of suffering in the sick-room in Newcastle when he afterwards wrote the hymn which never fails to touch the hearts of a Christian congregation. We owe him much for helping us to express that passionate desire:

[1] The *Journal* contains the further entry, 'I read prayers, and expounded Isa. xxxv. All listened, many wept, some received comfort'; from which we judge that Charles Wesley conducted a service in the Haworth Church.

Oh, that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall,
Join in the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all!

It was during this visit to Newcastle that we find another incident that reveals the fact that some of the clergy were beginning to adopt a wiser policy in their treatment of the Methodists. On the last day of October Charles Wesley rode to Whickham. The curate sent his love to him, with a message that he was glad of his coming, and obliged to him for endeavouring to do good among his people, for none wanted it more; and wishing him heartily good luck in the name of the Lord. This minister came with another clergyman to the preaching-service, and stayed to the Society meeting. Charles Wesley says, 'It was the exemplary behaviour of our Society, with the deaths of two or three, which convinced the ministers that this new sect, everywhere spoken against, is no other than the sect of the Nazarenes, or real Christians.' The friendly attitude of these ministers was maintained until December 19. When Charles Wesley called on one of them on that day he found 'his countenance changed.' He explains that the reason was he had been with the bishop, 'who had forbidden him to converse any more with me.' He adds, 'I marvel the prohibition did not come sooner.'

This rupture of the friendly relations with the clergy must have disappointed Charles Wesley, but the law of compensation once more acted. At Hexham there was a Dissenting minister, named Wardrobe, who sent him a pressing invitation to go to the town. Other people joined in the request. On November 27 and December 18 he visited Hexham and had a rough reception from the mob, but on his first visit he passed the evening in conference with Mr. Wardrobe, and was much impressed by him. He came to the conclusion that if all Dissenters were like-minded all dissensions would cease for ever. His knowledge of Dissenters never equalled that of his brother. In his *Farther Appeal* John Wesley, speaking of Presbyterians and Independents, says, 'Of whom in general I cannot but have a widely different opinion from that I entertained some years ago, as having since then conversed with many of them, "in whom the root of the matter is" undeniably found, and who labour to keep a conscience void

of offence, both toward God and toward men.' His association with Dr. Doddridge confirmed his charitable convictions, and led him nearer to his ultimate resolution to be 'the friend of all, the enemy of none.'

Charles Wesley's visit to the north did not terminate until February 10, 1747. We will leave him there, and return to John Wesley in order to close our description of the events of a notable year. On September 1 he left Bristol, after a visit to Wales. He arrived in Plymouth, met Herbert Jenkins, and went with him to the Dock. Then he rode to Cornwall, and rejoiced in the steadfastness of the persecuted people. He was delighted with the Methodists of Trewellard, near St. Just. He found no Society in Cornwall so lively. In order that their high tone might be maintained he took the opportunity of reproving a few of the members for their negligence in meeting with their brethren. He did so because he had found such negligence to be always 'the forerunner of greater evils.' He never changed his opinions on this point. After visiting the Societies in Cornwall, and preaching frequently, he returned to Plymouth Dock, preaching there in the evening of September 16 and on the following morning. He then left for Somerset. At Bridgwater he stopped to preach. He expected much tumult there, 'the great vulgar stirring up the small,' but he was surprised at the quietness of the people. He soon discovered the reason. The week before the Grand Jury had found a bill against the rioters who had frequently assaulted Mary Lockyer's house. 'This, and the awe of God which fell upon them, kept the whole congregation quiet and serious.' On his way to London he discovered that there were magistrates in England who did not fear to put the law in motion against rioters. At Wycombe abundance of the rabble, full of strong drink, came to the preaching-service on purpose to disturb. But they soon fell out among themselves, and Wesley was allowed to finish his sermon 'in tolerable quiet.' The next morning Mr. B. waited on the mayor, and said, 'Sir, I come to inform against a common swearer. I believe he swore an hundred oaths last night; but I marked down only twenty.' 'Sir,' said the mayor, 'you do very right in bringing him to justice. What is his name?' It was mentioned. 'Why, that is my son,' he cried. 'Yes, sir, so I understand.' The mayor then said, 'I have nothing to say in his defence.

If he breaks the law he must take what follows.' The education of magistrates was evidently progressing.

On Sunday, October 5, John Wesley was in Shoreham, and preached in the church morning and evening without any disturbance. The stolidity of the congregation surprised him, but he comforted himself with the thought that God could give them understanding in His time. The following Thursday was the day of public thanksgiving for the victory on April 16, at Culloden. By that time the humiliating panic had subsided, and Wesley and his people celebrated the victory with ' solemn joy.' The invasion had cost the Methodists much acute suffering, and they now hoped for better days.

In this book we have laid the greatest stress on the religious aspect of the work done by the Wesleys and those who were associated with them, but an incident which occurred at the close of 1746 reminds us that Methodism, from its beginning, was more than a mission to the souls of men. It had its philanthropic side. It assailed ignorance ; it fought the evils which were destroying the bodies of men ; it sympathized with and constantly helped the poor and the sick. The Wesleys have left a distinct mark on the philanthropic agencies of this country. Mr. Brigden, in a series of articles in the *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, has reminded us of the part played by Samuel Wesley, the brother of John and Charles Wesley, in the founding of the Westminster Hospital. He was one of the projectors of the first infirmary set up at Westminster in 1719, which was the predecessor of the present hospital. It was opened in Petty France, and the poor sick were admitted to it, were attended by physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, and nurses, supplied with food and physic, and were visited daily by some one or other of the clergy. In 1724 a house was taken in Chapel Street, and the work spread and prospered. In the minute-books of the old infirmary the familiar names of John Hutton and Samuel Wesley often appear. The committees were sometimes held in the Grey Coat School, and Samuel Wesley frequently presided. We are indebted to Mr. Brigden for reminding us of our obligation to these men for the services they rendered to the sick poor in these half-forgotten times.[1]

In 1735 John and Charles Wesley, when on their way to

[1] *W.H.S. Proceedings*, xi., 97–99.

Georgia, stayed with John Hutton. An infirmary-house had been taken in James Street two years before, and we can imagine that their host would entertain them with accounts of the progress that had been made. John Wesley may have got a hint at that time. It is certain that on December 4, 1746, he mentioned to his Society that he had formed a design of giving physic to the poor. A dispensary was immediately set up in a room at the Foundery. At first he prepared and administered medicine himself; but afterwards he employed an apothecary and an experienced surgeon, resolving not to undertake complicated cases. The treatment of sick people at the Foundery was so successful that he opened another dispensary at Bristol. Mr. George J. Stevenson was of opinion that John Wesley was the founder of the first free dispensary opened within the city of London.[1]

In glancing over the road we have travelled in this volume we find it difficult to believe that only seven years have elapsed since we saw John Wesley walking from Fetter Lane to the little company waiting for him on Christmas Eve in 1739. The progress made in the period has been extraordinary. The foundations of the 'United Societies of the People called Methodists' have been truly laid. It is well to examine them, for they have determined the character of the Methodist Church. In our opinion those seven years were amongst the most formative of any of the periods of our history. In studying the constitution of our Church we have given a ready assent to the aphorism of Dr. Stubbs: 'The roots of the present lie deep in the past, and nothing in the past is dead to the man who would learn how the present comes to be what it is.'[2] That truth has been often in our mind when we have attempted to detect the origin of the rules that govern Methodist work, discipline, and organization. We have found it best to go at once to the famous 'seven years.' If our description of the incidents of that period induces our readers to follow our example we shall be repaid for our toil. If we have helped them to see the 'living Wesley' more clearly, and to appreciate his work at its true value, still greater will be our reward. But our satisfaction will not be complete unless they lose sight of men and churches and human agencies, and devoutly say with Wesley, 'What hath God wrought!'

[1] *History of City Road Chapel*, p. 40. [2] *Constitutional History*, pref.

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2. The old connexion with the *Religious* Societies was broken
3. The breach with the *Moravians* had become permanent
4. The *Welsh Calvinistic* Methodists were separately organized
5. Thus the 'United Societies' were placed by the voluntary action of the members under Wesley's constant care and direction
6. Hence he drew up RULES—the step that led to the unifying of the Methodist Societies throughout the world

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1. Thomas Beard (1743–1744)
2. Joseph Cownley (1746–1793)
3. John Downes (1743–1774)
4. John Haime (1745–1784)
5. Christopher Hopper (1747–1802)
6. Henry Millard (1742–1746)
7. John Nelson (1741–1774)
8. Charles Perronet (1747–1776)
9. John Slocomb (1744–1777)
10. Thomas Westell (1740–1794)
II. Itinerant Preachers who afterwards (often because of absence from their families) 'desisted from travelling' (†), or became clergymen (*c*):—
1. John Bennet (1743–1751)†
2. John Cennick (1740–1742)†
3. John Haughton (1741–1760) *c*
4. Thomas Hardwick (1742–1749)†
5. Howell Harris (1747–1750)†
6. James Jones (1743–1749)†
7. Herbert Jenkins (1743–1753)†
8. Samuel Larwood (1743–1754)†
9. Thomas Maxfield (1740–1763) *c*
10. Thomas Meyrick (1742–1750) *c*
11. Richard Moss (1745–1752) *c*
12. Edward Perronet (1747–1778)†
13. Thomas Richards (1740–1759) *c*
14. Jonathan Reeves (1742–1760) *c*
15. William Shent (1746–1753)†
16. William Shepherd (1743–1748)†
17. David Taylor (1740–1746)†
18. John Trembath (1743–1760)†
19. Francis Walker (1744–1753)†
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WESLEY, CHARLES, A.M. (1707–1788), third son of Samuel Wesley (Rector of Epworth) and his wife Susanna (Annesley); scholar of Westminster School, and Christ Church, Oxford (S. vol. i., 358), 186; 'The Holy Club' (1729–35), 138; ordained Deacon (September 21, 1735) by Dr. Potter, Bishop of Oxford, 186; and Priest (September 29, 1735) by Dr. Gibson, Bishop of London, 186; converted (Whit Sunday, May 21, 1738), 138; shared with his brother John the alternate care of the London and Bristol Societies, 22; preached up the 'Ordinances' in London, 11; with John Wesley interviewed Molther on 'stillness,' 11; experienced Whitsuntide mob at the Foundery, 18; named in 'presentment' of Foundery (May, 1740), 19; visited Oxford, 30; prolonged visit to Bristol—sacramental question at Kingswood, 30–32; and Predestination controversy with Cennick, 33–37; ill with fever at Bristol, 35; visit to Wales, 36; affected in London with 'stillness' (January, 1741), 37–38; recovers himself and returns from Oxford, preaching at the Foundery on 'the true way of waiting on God,' 38–39; controversy with Whitefield, 43–47; gaps in his *Journal* (January–March, 1741), 38; and from September (1741) to January (1743), 84; special prayer with Society at Bristol (July 25, 1741) for John's University Sermon, 57; with Mr. Robert Jones at Bristol, dealt with rioters (September, 1741), 59–60; preached before Oxford University on 'Awake, thou that Sleepest' (April 4, 1742), 65–6; his mother's death (July 30), 80–81; his song 'in his solitude' (*M.H.B.* 802), 81; John met him and Mr. Graves at Bristol (August), and dealt with the Magdalen document, 83–84; with Mr. Graves visits Newcastle (October), 84; and Wednesbury, 85; John joined him at Bristol (April, 1743), and he signs the *Rules* (May 1), 104, 117; journey

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Wesley, Emilia (or 'Emily') (1691–1771) (Mrs. Robert Harper), eldest sister of John Wesley (S. vol. i., 59–61); lived at Gainsborough, where she kept a school, but on becoming a widow joined her mother at the Foundery (Dec., 1739), 12; and was at her mother's deathbed, 81

Wesley, John, A.M. (1703–1791), second son of Samuel and Susanna Wesley, Founder of Methodism (S. vol. i., 359–361): first preaches at Foundery (Nov., 1739), founds little Society (Dec., 1739), and on Christmas Eve, 1739, walks from Fetter Lane to his 'little company' (S. vol. i., 328–9), 336; Molther's doctrine of 'stillness' had alienated most of the Fetter Lane members from Wesley and led to his Separation from that Society (chap. i.), 9–15; after brief visit to Oxford and Bristol (Jan., 1740) organizing Relief Fund for poor at Bristol, he returned to London and dealt with the disputes by a compromise which failed, 10–11; returned again from Bristol in April, and he and Charles interviewed Molther, 11; settled his mother and sister in Foundery House, 12; joined with his mother, Lady Huntingdon, and a few friends in Communion (July 18), followed by meeting of nineteen members who resolved to separate, 13–14; final severance (July 20), 14–15; Progress at Foundery, including morning *Expositions*, quashing of rioters (support of Sir John Ganson); institution of 'bands,' sacraments at St. Luke's 'our parish church,' recognition of Maxfield as suitable to leave in charge in absence and of his place as a 'regular' lay-preacher, checking 'doubtful disputations,' careful preparation of 'roll' and means of knowing members, and introduction of

quarterly contributions towards debt (chap. ii.), 16–29; at Bristol and Kingswood to see Charles in his illness (Sept.), 35; again in November, and interviewed Cennick on *Predestination controversy*, 36; and again (Dec. 1740—Jan., 1741), 36, 37; hurried to London when Charles was affected with 'stillness,' and took up expositions, 37–38; rejoiced in his recovery and return from Oxford, 38–39; interviews with Sir John Ganson on highest support of justice against rioters, 39; returned to Bristol, made 'band-society' his Council, gave 'Tickets,' administered discipline, and excluded Cennick and others, 40–43; controversy continued with Whitefield, leading to suspension of their friendly relations for a time, 43–48; CONSOLIDATION of work (chap. iv.), 48–53, including system of visitation, Fund of Relief for sick and poor by 'penny a week' contribution, definite act of 'reception into full membership,' and institution of 'stewards' meetings'; EXTENSION of work (chap. iv.), 53–55, by opening his commission in the Midlands; his University sermon *The Almost Christian* at Oxford, 55–57; sacramental arrangements at Wapping, 57–58; final BREAK with *Moravianism* after interview with Zinzendorf, 58–59; henceforth devoted himself to his evangelizing and pastoral MISSION, 59; illness at Bristol, 60–61; formed Society at Bath, and interviewed Dr. Cheyne, 61; illness in London (Jan., 1742), 62; institution of 'classes' at Bristol (Feb., 1742), and in London, 62–65; special prayer for Charles's University sermon (April), 65; first 'watchnight' in London, 66; friendly meeting with Whitefield, 67–68, and their summons to Dr. Potter and Dr. Gibson, 68; visit to MIDLANDS AND NORTH (chap. v.), including Donington, Birstall (with John Nelson), Newcastle (May, 1742), 68–76; on return at Birstall, Halifax, and EPWORTH, 76–78, Sheffield, Barley Hall, Ripley, and Donington, 78–79; visits Bristol and Wales, 80; death and burial of his mother, and funeral sermon at grave, 80–83; at Bristol met Charles and Mr. Graves and dealt with Magdalen document, 83–84; second visit to Newcastle when he acquired site for 'Orphan House' (Nov.–Dec.), 85–90; published (1742) his pamphlets establishing the *Character* and the *Principle* of the METHODISTS, 90–96; visits Epworth, Wednesbury (Jan., 1743), 97; third visit to Newcastle (Feb.–April) and issued his RULES (chap. vii.), 97–113; during a week's rest at Bristol, he and Charles considered *Rules* and latter's signature was added (May 1), 117; brothers meet at Nottingham (June 24), 126; John told of summons to Wednesbury and account of RIOTS, and of his consulting Mr. Littleton at Tamworth, 126–31; acquires WEST STREET CHAPEL (London) (chap. ix.), 132–135; abortive Conference of the three communities in London, 147–8; his Hymn-books and Tune-books (1742), 149–150; formation of 'Select Societies,' 150–1; acquired SNOWSFIELDS as third centre in London (Aug., 1743), 151–2; his first visit to CORNWALL with John Nelson, John Downes, and William Shepherd (chap. x.), 153, 158–165; his *Earnest Appeal*, 153–158; his return journey *via* Sticklepath, Exeter, Axminster and Taunton, 165–166; visited Bristol, Wales (with Mr. Gwynne at Garth), Bristol ('public debt' discharged), and Birmingham, 168–9; fourth visit to WEDNESBURY and his 'chain of providences' in *Riots* (chap. xi.), 169–173; joined his brother with 'clothes torn to tatters' at Nottingham (Oct. 21), 173; visited North of England Oct.–Nov.), 175; in London (Dec.–Jan. 9), 175–6; revived Society at Bristol from 'stillness' (Jan. 1744), 176; cheering letter from John Haime, 176; England at war (TROUBLOUS TIMES, chap. xii.), but the Wesleys pursued their work, although their loyalty was questioned and Wesley believed to be in league with the Pretender, 178–181; he stayed in London because of Government order to all 'Papists and reputed Papists' to leave London, 181; wrote *Address* to the King, but on brother's advice did not present it, 181–2; after brief visit to Bristol (March), he met the Surrey Justices at their court at the Town Hall, St. Margaret's Hill, Southwark, and took the oaths to the King and signed Declaration against Popery, 182; second visit to CORNWALL, *via* Bristol, Axminster, Sticklepath, and met Rev. John Bennett at Laneast, 187–189; preaching tour in Wales, 189; eight days' *rest*, 'though not unemployed,' at Bristol, 189; journey north (May), *via* Epworth, Sykehouse, Birstall (heard of John Nelson's arrest for a soldier), Leeds, Wensleydale, to NEWCASTLE, 190–

195; during 'a quiet week' prepared the *Agenda* for his First Conference, 195–197; met John Nelson and Thomas Beard at Durham, 197–9; visited Knaresborough, Leeds, Birstall, Epworth, 199; reached London and found trouble between Williams and his brother, 199–201; held the First Conference, preaching on 'What hath God wrought?' and declares it to be the 'Work of God' (chap. xiv.), 202–221; visits Vincent Perronet (who became his great friend) at Shoreham, 229–30; preached his Farewell Sermon at Oxford University (Aug. 24) (chap. xv.), 230–234; studied history of his Nonconformist ancestry, 234–5; chiefly in London to end of 1744, 235; in touch with Methodist soldiers on Continent, 237–8; visited James Hutton and saw Stonehouse (Jan., 1745), 240; Dodsley's *Copyright* action, 241–2; found relief in rest at Bristol, 240–242; visit to Newcastle, wrote *Eirenicon* but without avail, 242–245; continued his work in London in spite of Dread of Invasion (1745) and questioning of his supporters (chap. xvi.), 245–249; called at Bristol and dealt with *Antinomian* trouble, and then proceeded to Cornwall, 249; met with persecution led by Dr. Borlase and arrest of Maxfield as a soldier, 250–252; the *fiasco* of his own arrest by Mr. Usticke, 252–4; in danger at Falmouth, and escape to Penryn, 254; rest of visit disturbed by 'alarums of war,' 255; held first Circuit Quarterly Meeting at St. Ives (July 13, 1745), 255; visited Mr. Bennett's parishes, on way to Minehead, where he embarked for Wales, 255–6; visited Mr. Gwynne at Garth with Mr. Hodges of Wenvoe, and they went with him to Bristol, 256; held Second Conference at Bristol (Aug., 1745) (chap. xvii.), 257–63; his correspondence with 'John Smith,' 272–3, 276–280; left London for north (Sept., 1745), *via* Northampton (visited Dr. Doddridge), Sheffield, Leeds, reaching Newcastle, 284–7; found town in War's Alarms (chap. xix), but preached and visited Societies of circuit, 289; answered 'John Smith's' first *Letter*, 289–90; in a brief absence went to Gateshead, Epworth (found Mr. Romley changed), Sheffield, 290; wrote on the rebellion *A Word in Season*, 290; preached to soldiers, 291; on way to London called at Wednesbury and records with elation the improved conditions, 291; hears his brother's report of successful work in Wales, Bristol, and London and of his care for soldiers, 291–2; the Old Book Room and its publications for the 'defence of the Methodists' whilst Charles wrote the songs of the people (chap. xx.), 293–310; Classes began to *meet* weekly (1742), 311–3; his troubles concerning ownership of Kingswood School site, 313–14; Settlement of Bristol 'Room' and Newcastle 'Orphan House' on Trusts, 315–7; his first volume of *Sermons* begun at another of his 'retreats' (Lewisham) and issued 1746, 317–20; read King's *Essay* on the *Primitive Church*, 321–2; held Third Conference (May, 1746), 322–5; visited Wales from Bristol, 334; visited Cornwall *via* Plymouth Dock, and delighted with Trewellard, 334; on return stopped to preach at Bridgwater and Wycombe, 334–5; from London visited Shoreham, 335; celebrated *Day of Thanksgiving* (Oct. 9) with his people 'with solemn joy,' 335; founded Dispensaries for poor in London and Bristol, 336. See also Diary, Journal and World-Parish. For *Lives* of, see under Moore, Southey, Tyerman, and Whitehead.

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Wesley, Susanna (1669–1742), daughter of Dr. Annesley, wife of Samuel Wesley (Rector of Epworth), and mother of the Wesleys (S. vol. i., 361); lived in Foundery House (December, 1739, to her death), 12; closely connected with the Society, 12; her wise counsels deeply influenced her sons, 12, 80; the Wesleys' parish

of St. Luke's, Old Street, divided from her father's old parish—an interesting link with her past, 22; her opinion of Thomas Maxfield, 24; her Epworth Rectory memories, 25; her winsome charm, brightness, and patience in the Annesley and Rectory homes, 80; visited by her friend, Lady Huntingdon, 80; the 'passing' of her gracious spirit, 80–81; John and his five sisters sang a *Psalm* of praise to God at her wish, 81; Charles's 'song in his solitude' (*M.H.B.*, 802), 81; her burial in Bunhill Fields, and John's sermon to multitude, 81–83; reference to her in Mrs. Clarke's *Susanna Wesley* (Eminent Women Series), 12; her *Pamphlet* in which she stood by John Wesley in the bitter conflict on his 'Free Grace' sermon, 197

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